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FIRST THINGS

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"Father, Forgive Them"

ALLEN D. HERTZKE

What I Learned in China

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

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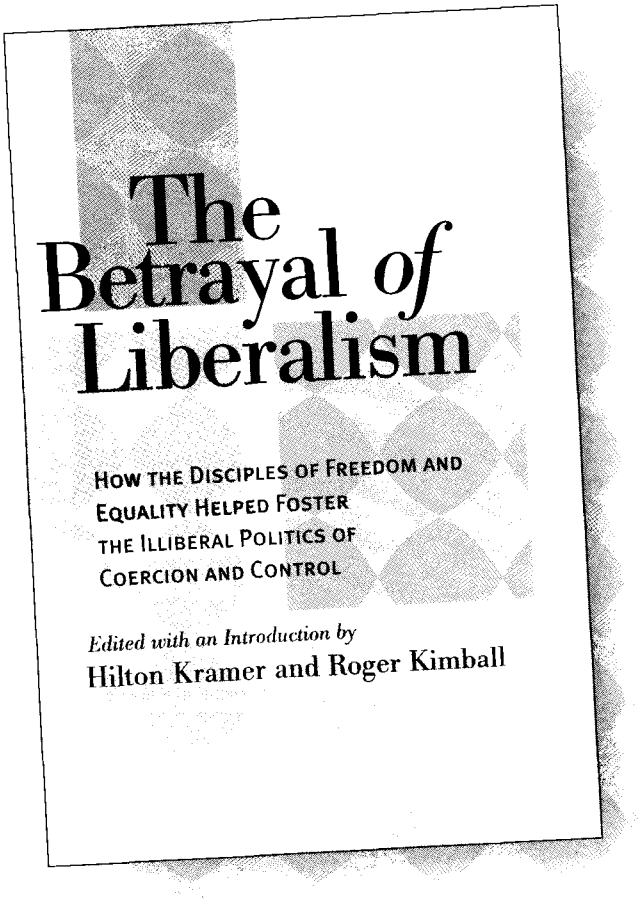
What liberalism means and what it stands for now

The Betrayal of Liberalism

Edited With an Introduction by Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball


The Betrayal of Liberalism
How the Disciples of Freedom and Equality Helped Foster the Illiberal Politics of Coercion and Control
Edited with an Introduction by
Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball

In these incisive essays which first appeared in the *New Criterion*, ten distinguished critics and observers examine the origins and prospects of liberalism, from its roots in thinkers such as Rousseau and Mill to its troubled legacy in 20th-century pursuits, and its compromising effects in the moral and intellectual life of our culture.

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A Confessional State?

In "Proposing Democracy Anew—Part Three" (December 1999), Richard John Neuhaus proclaims his opposition to confessional states. In addition to rather infelicitously characterizing arguments for a confessional state as "dumb ideas," he writes: "I believe such a goal is wrongheaded, and it is clearly contrary to Catholic teaching, as the above citations illustrate." What is wrongheaded, however, is Father Neuhaus' interpretation of Church teaching about this matter.

The three citations to which Fr. Neuhaus refers only address the issue of religious freedom; they do not speak directly to the subject of confessional states. From the fact that the Church supports immunity from coercion with respect to religious activity "within due limits" in order that each person may fulfill his moral obligation to know the truth and behave accordingly (*Dignitatis Humanae*, s. 2; cf. *Libertas Praestantissimum*, s. 30), Fr. Neuhaus presumes that he therefore must oppose confessional states. Besides not demonstrating the logical necessity of how religious freedom rightly understood necessarily precludes the possibility of a publicly established religion, however, Fr. Neuhaus also fails to take into account that the Church time and again has expressed an explicit preference for confessional—namely, Catholic—states.

The following quotations are just a few examples of the Magisterium's endorsement of confessional states. In *Libertas Praestantissimum* (s. 21), Pope Leo XIII declares that "the profession of one religion is necessary for the State" and "that religion must be professed which alone is true." When writing to the bishops of the United States in *Longinqua Oceani* (s. 6), Leo cautions them that "it would be very erroneous to draw the conclusion that in America is to be sought the type of the most desirable status of the Church, or that it would be universally lawful or expedient for State and Church to be, as in America, dissevered and divorced." Instead, he explains that the Church in America "would bring forth more abundant fruits if, in addition to liberty, she enjoyed the favor of the laws and the patronage of the public authority." Following enactment of the French law disestablishing the Catholic Church in 1905-06, Pope Pius X criticized "the principle that the State must not recognize any religious cult" for giving rise to the "absolutely false, . . . most pernicious error" of the separation of church and state (*Vehementer Nos*, s. 3).

Notably, although *Dignitatis Humanae* does recommend religious freedom even in instances when "special civil recognition is given to one religious community in the constitutional order of society," it does not suggest that the two are incompatible (s. 6). The reason can be found in the document's preface where it insists that religious freedom "leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ" (s. 1). Since the Church's teaching that she should enjoy not only the protection but also the privilege of the laws is well established in her tradition, one must conclude that the truly Catholic understanding of religious freedom in no way abrogates it absent any statement on her part to the contrary.

Ronny L. Fritz
Silver Spring, Maryland

In the last of his three-part series, "Proposing Democracy Anew," Richard John Neuhaus confusedly

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presents his position on the separation of church and state, pluralism, religious indifferentism, and the proper content of the public square such that one is unsure whether he is proposing a societal ideal, for which Catholics and all people should perpetually strive, or a merely provisional goal, for which we may now work temporarily, but only in lieu of pursuing directly a greater ideal. Moreover, when comparing Father Neuhaus' eloquent yet ambiguous words with the stark and unmistakable language of Popes Leo XIII, Pius X, and Pius XI, one wonders whether his position, provisional or ideal, can be reconciled with the Catholic Church.

For example, Fr. Neuhaus claims that "the alternative to the naked public square is not the sacred public square but the civil public square. We should not want a confessional state." What does this mean? Does he mean that in the present state of affairs, where the prospect of a confessional state is next to nil, we should prudently strive incrementally to achieve a lesser good, like a merely civil society, postponing the direct pursuit of a sacred public square and a confessional state until prudence dictates? Or is he saying that we should never desire such things because the ideal is a merely civil public square, with the public confession, profession, and worship of the True Religion relegated to the private sphere for both religion and society's own good?

If Fr. Neuhaus is saying what I think he is saying, that a confessional state is simply a bad idea per se, then it would seem he has never read Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*. No. 77 condemns the following: "In the present day it is no longer expedient that the Catholic Religion should be held as the only religion of the State, to the exclusion of all other forms of worship."

But Fr. Neuhaus probably has read this condemnation, and if such can be reconciled with his ostensibly prudential judgment that a confessional state is a bad idea right now, then why does he not make his position clear? As it stands, the two positions seem irreconcilable.

Again, about Fr. Neuhaus' oft-repeated claim that a separation of church and state is a necessary condition for modern societies: is this an absolute necessity, based upon its intrinsic goodness? Pope Pius X's words on the matter in *Vehementor Nos* would seem to suggest otherwise:

"That the State must be separated from the Church is a thesis absolutely false, a most pernicious error. Based, as it is, on the principle that the State must not recognize any religious cult, it is in the first place guilty of a great injustice to God; for the Creator of man is also the founder of human societies, and preserves their existence as He preserves our own. We owe Him, therefore, not only a private cult, but a public and social worship to honor Him."

Is not the separation of church and state clearly condemned here? Even Fr. Neuhaus' nuanced version? Is not a "public and social worship" tantamount to a sacred public square? But even if Fr. Neuhaus' position can somehow be reconciled with Pius XII's, why does it feel like one is reading two entirely different positions? Does not Fr. Neuhaus have an obligation to echo both the spirit and the letter of these teachings so as to prevent confusion?

Thaddeus Kozinski
Manassas, Virginia

RJN replies:
Messrs. Ronny L. Fritz and Thaddeus Kozinski helpfully remind us of historically important statements of aspects of Catholic teaching pertinent to the questions addressed in "Proposing Democracy Anew." In the course of the development of the Church's teaching, we have at present the most comprehensive understanding of the free, just, and democratic society set forth in encyclicals such as *Centesimus Annus* and *Evangelium Vitae*. What I wrote is, I believe, entirely consonant with those documents, as those documents are consonant with earlier statements made in different historical circumstances.

Mr. Kozinski asks about the distinction between the ideal and what is prudentially judged to be possible or desirable. Catholics must want all people to be in full communion with the Catholic Church, since we believe it is the Church of Jesus Christ most fully and rightly ordered through time. In that historically improbable circumstance of universally effective evangelization, the Church would no doubt, in the words of Leo XIII, enjoy "the favor of the laws and the patronage of the public authority."

In fact, in America the Catholic Church, along with other churches and religious communities, does enjoy favor and patronage in many important ways; none of them enjoys such favor and patronage exclusively, nor should that be the case. Church and state in America are not "dissevered and divorced." Such disseveration and divorce is the goal of the ACLU and other strict separationists who favor the naked public square. Their efforts to achieve that goal meet with powerful resistance and are today, I believe, on the defensive. (Incidentally, in the 1899 letter *Testem Benevolentiae*, Leo expressly says he does not criticize the laws and customs of the American polity.)

Even if a politically effective majority of citizens were Catholic, we should not want a confessional state if that means the Church, in its hierarchical self-definition, would be party to executing the necessarily coercive power of the state. Such an imaginary circumstance might be democratic in the sense that it would reflect the majority will, but it would violate the freedom and justice at the heart of Catholic social doctrine. (See the above-mentioned encyclicals on the limits and distortions of democracy.) Moreover, in a reproach to the clericalism that marks conventional notions of a confessional state, the Second Vatican Council is emphatic that the governance of worldly affairs is the vocation of the laity; the hierarchy

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is to support them in that vocation. Further, learning from the bitter experience of grandiose notions of the state, contemporary Catholic teaching sharply delimits its role as spiritual or moral tutor.

I believe, in sum, that my judgment faithfully reflects the mind of the Church as articulated by the Magisterium—some earlier statements in understandable reaction against the French Revolution, the attacks on the papal states, and the dogmas of militantly anti-Catholic secularism notwithstanding. Of course, the Church as the Body of Christ or communio is the historical form of the Risen Lord who already reigns over what St. Paul called the principalities and powers of the present time, including the state. As we are assured in Philippians 2, that will be acknowledged by all in due course. Admittedly, these questions are historically and theologically complicated, which is why they are regularly discussed in these pages. (For further clarification, see my article "The Liberalism of John Paul II," FT, May 1997.)

Can We Talk?

In her article "Don't Talk About Race" (December 1999), Sarah E. Hinlicky shows herself to be all too vulnerable to the tiresome phenomenon known as "white guilt."

Ms. Hinlicky has clearly not exorcised all the demons of what I take to be her former liberalism if she still reflexively shudders at the notion of black and white students eating at different tables, i.e., segregation by choice. What so many liberals fail to understand is that there is nothing, nothing whatsoever, wrong with that picture. It merely displays what sensible people can see is a commonsensical outcome: one tends to hang around with those who share one's own cultural perspective. White culture and black culture are not the same, by and large. A lack of cultural integration does not equate to racism or bigotry on anyone's part. There is nothing evil in a white person having no close black friends, or vice versa. Ms. Hinlicky acknowledges that culture, not race, is the real issue here, but she still seems uneasy absolving herself of the "sin" of feeling uncomfortable around black people, since they represent what for her is a strange and unfamiliar culture. I would like to invite her to see that such a feeling does not make her a racist or a bigot.

Andy Nowicki
Irving, Texas

As someone who writes almost exclusively about race, I found much in Sarah E. Hinlicky's essay with which I agree. Especially insightful is her comment that anything written on the subject will trigger, axiomatically, cries of insensitivity, or worse, pure racism, from the racial advocacy groups. However, her conclusion—black America and white America are different cultures—is mostly wrong.

From the dormitory cafeterias of our nation's elite universities, it is easy to draw the conclusion that there is a distinct black culture and white culture. The self-segregation that Ms. Hinlicky observed as an undergraduate should come as no surprise to anyone who has witnessed the black-only freshman orientation, black-only graduation ceremonies, and black-only dormitories so prevalent on college campuses today. How our diversity-minded university administrators allow this self-segregation to flourish is a mystery.

I am confident, however, that Ms. Hinlicky will observe that life outside the academy is less racially polarized for the most part. Whether one examines church attendance, election results, rates of intermarriage, or attitudes about dating, one fact stands out: the American melting pot is alive and well for American blacks, just as it was in the past for Italians, Jews, and Asians, to name just a few.

Blacks and whites have the same culture: American. Overwhelmingly, in survey after survey, middle-class blacks and whites share the same values and admire the same virtues and traditions that are at the core of our American culture. This is not to suggest that there are not differences in political outlooks between the races, but that is not the same as culture. Cultural differences do exist between Americans locked in impoverished inner cities and rural outposts, but those mostly transcend race.

Ms. Hinlicky has been a witness to the academic-intoxicated celebration of "cultural diversity" at the expense of our cultural commonality. It is time for these colleges to take away the punchbowl.

Edward Blum, Chairman
Campaign for a Color-Blind America
Houston, Texas

Contradictory Ecumenism?

We can all be grateful for Father Avery Dulles' very clear exposition of the Catholic position on justification in "The Two Languages of Salvation" (December 1999). He frankly acknowledges it is "difficult to defend" the non-applicability of Tridentine anathemas to certain Lutheran passages in the Joint Declaration, and finds the Annex to be of no help.

But it seems to me that the real difficulty of the Joint Declaration concerns reality as such, the principle of noncontradiction. Either a Lutheran proposition A states a meaning or it doesn't; either that proposition con-

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tradicts Trent's true proposition A or it doesn't; either proposition A reveals a reality as it is, or covers it up (falsehood). No amount of padding of A with innocuous or true propositions B, C, D can change that truth value of A. The conjunction of a false proposition with other propositions into a "system," "thought-form," or "language" does not remedy the falsehood of that proposition. Nothing is gained by saying that the Lutheran system which contains A is an acceptable "language"; the metaphor "language" has no meaning here. If a student of mine defended a self-contradictory paper by saying that he was speaking two different languages, I would have to fail him.

Fr. Dulles realizes the difficulty. But he thereupon switches from a realist presentation of contradictory Catholic and Lutheran doctrines to the idealist ecumenical epistemology of different "languages," each of which is able to dissolve contradiction by adding mutually agreeable related doctrine when one of its points contradicts something in the other "language." Had this hermeneutic existed in the fourth century, Nicenes could have passed Joint Declarations with Arians, who after all accepted the New Testament, including the Johannine prologue; those bishops who did so in weakness or confusion, including Pope Liberius, have gone down in history under Jerome's celebrated lament, "the whole world groaned to find itself Arian."

Ansgar Santogrossi, OSB
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Mt. Angel Seminary
St. Benedict, Oregon

Avery Dulles replies:

Brother Ansgar states very well the difficulty that Catholics committed to the teaching of Trent inevitably find in the Joint Declaration. For example, the Joint Declaration at various points seems to approve the thesis that justification consists in God's not imputing our sins to us. The Official Catholic Response of June 1999 correctly noted the difficulty of reconciling this thesis with Trent, which insisted that God's grace removes everything that is truly sin and makes us truly and interiorly righteous.

How, then, could the highest authorities in the Lutheran and Catholic churches agree to sign the Declaration, which affirms that the positions of both churches on justification escape the condemnations of the sixteenth century? Brother Ansgar seems to suggest that they are victims of "weakness and confusion." But I suggest a more positive appraisal. Theologians, I believe, are being urged to adopt a fresh approach, at once more biblical and more suited to the needs of our day. It is necessary to transcend the sixteenth-century state of the question, in which the complexities of theological discourse were insufficiently noted.

My hypothesis (and it is little more than a hypothesis) is that the authorities are implicitly saying that the Lutheran and Catholic formulations seize authentic aspects of the mystery of justification, but do so from different perspectives. Following the analysis proposed by Otto Hermann Pesch in 1967, one may call these perspectives respectively "existential" and "sapiential." According to the perspectival approach, the reality is deeper and more complex than either set of formulations indicates.

Brother Ansgar's analogy from Nicaea does not hold because Arius and Nicaea were speaking within the same conceptual framework and manifestly contradicting each other. A better analogy might be the Council of Florence, which approved two alternate formulas regarding the procession of the Holy Spirit. The predominantly Western tradition holds that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son as from a single coprinciple, whereas a predominantly Eastern tradition holds that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Son. From an Eastern point of view, the "Western" formulation seems to overlook the unique role of the Father as primordial source. From a Western point of view, the "Eastern" formulation is unsatisfactory because it appears to make the Father only a remote source of the Spirit and to instrumentalize the role of the Son in the origin of the Spirit.

In his masterly work on the Trinity, Yves Congar explains that the mystery is too exalted to be encapsulated in any one theological system. Theologians, he suggests, may be in a position similar to physicists who sometimes use a particle model and other times a wave model in dealing with the phenomenon of light. Niels Bohr proposed a theory of complementarity according to which "the opposite of a true statement is a false statement, but the opposite of a profound truth can be another profound truth."

My hypothesis about the "two languages" receives some confirmation from the fact that Catholics in prayer

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use expressions closer to the Lutheran than to the Tridentine. The saints gladly confess that their righteousness is like a "filthy rag." With a deep sense of their abiding sinfulness, they beg God to have mercy on them out of love for Christ.

To my way of thinking, the Joint Declaration (even when read in light of the Official Common Statement, the Annex, and the Note on the Annex) is not a definitive solution but a step along the way. It leaves theologians with the task of showing more concretely how the "two languages" are ultimately compatible. Some of this work has already been done by the bilateral dialogues, but much remains to be done.

A Vision of Mary

Fastball pitchers normally tire by the ninth inning, and since my book was the ninth of nine reviewed by Charlotte Allen in "The Holy Feminine" (December 1999), perhaps fastball fatigue explains why she threw those wicked curves at my *Roses, Fountains, and Gold: The Virgin Mary in History, Art, and Apparition.* In any case, all of them missed the plate.

The first was low, outside, and in the dirt—the accusation that I somehow failed to "[bring] home the fact that the saint the Christian Church chose to glorify above all other was Mary of Nazareth." Let me respond as gently as I can by pointing out, first, that Mary's pride of place among, and indeed above, the saints hasn't been in doubt since the Council of Ephesus, and, second, that anyone who writes as rhapsodically as I do about the Mother of God could more justifiably be accused of Mariolatry than of Marian understatement.

My critic's second curve was closer to a beanball. With malice aforepitch, she accuses me of including "many too many apparitions of a dubious, even crackpot nature." What she conveniently ignores is that whereas I devote eight full chapters to such authenticated Marian apparitions as Lourdes and Fatima, I write of the dubious ones—some *very* dubious, some not so dubious at all—in a single round-up chapter that contains an emphatic caveat.

Finally, she throws me the unkindest curve of all when she accuses me of "breezy diction"—which is like accusing me of bearing a dangerous resemblance to myself. What can I do? Breezy I was born, and breezy I remain. If my little gusts and zephyrs annoy my critic, I can only point out they had the opposite effect on those who wrote rave reviews for the *National Catholic Register,* the *New Oxford Review,* and the *Remnant,* among a half-dozen others.

Since Charlotte Allen had nothing at all good to say about my work, I wish I could return the compliment. But in fact, apart from her curveballs and her tragic lack of breeziness, I find her a talented writer. Indeed, even as I type these words, I'm gritting my dentures and doing my hypocritical best to wish her well. As the Pentecostals say, God love her, and I'm tryin'.

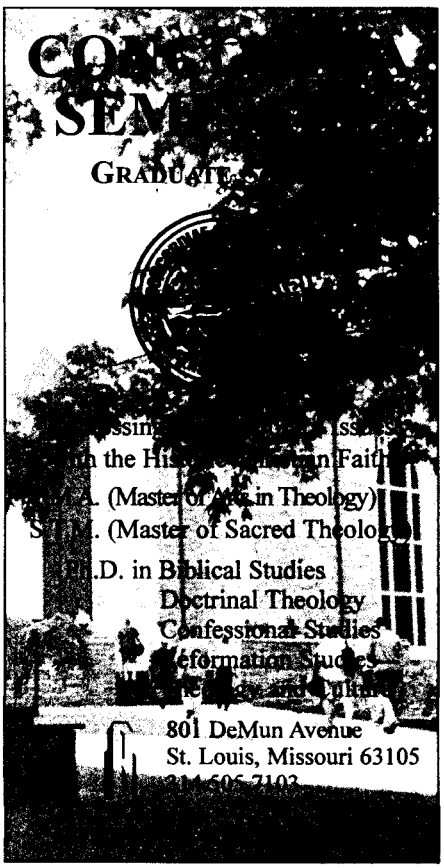
John Martin
Brooklyn, New York

Charlotte Allen replies:

I return the compliment. Mr. Martin is also a talented writer—as his lively, well organized, and admirably chivalrous letter complaining of my treatment of his book amply demonstrates. But therein lies the problem with the book. "Breezy diction" is highly suitable for letters to the editor, where space is tight and the writer must make his point forcefully and persuasively without coming off like a sputtering crank. It does not work so well in a history such as Mr. Martin's of two thousand years of Marian art and popular devotion, where the writing should be vivid but not overly informal, lest readers not take it seriously. For example, in his lengthy survey of numerous reported Marian apparitions, Mr. Martin never makes it clear, stylistically or otherwise, which ones might be regarded as genuine and which ones the fabrications of crackpots. However, I agree that my review might have been overly hard on his book, which, in covering a great deal of ground in relatively few pages, has the virtues of brevity and conciseness—virtues I failed to point out the first time around. He also displays an enthusiasm for his subject matter that is not without its charms.

Judaism and Homosexuality

I think that David Novak's discussion of my book *Matters of Life and Death: A Jewish Approach to Modern Medical Ethics* (November 1999) fails as a review, not because it is negative, but because most of it focuses on a total of what occupies 12 out of 423 pages of text (exclusive of bibliography and index) in my book. The review thus loses sight of the book it is supposed to evaluate and becomes instead an expression



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The Benefits of Social Stigmas

Three young adults removed stop signs from a road, which contributed to a collision killing three teenagers. The vandals received long prison terms, but they were only imitating their elders. For a generation now we've been removing crucial signs from the dangerous road of life. We removed most of the signs warning teenagers of the dangers of premarital sex and pregnancy. When I went to school in the 1950s, there was stigma attached to unmarried pregnancy and pregnant teenagers weren't rewarded with government checks. As a result, there were few unwed mothers. Moreover, abortion was unsafe, illegal, and rare. Some women were killed or injured by illegal abortions — a terrible price to pay. But maybe that's one reason why there were so few abortions. We've removed the signs saying "Stigma Ahead" and "Danger Ahead," and then we pretend surprise when collisions result.

— David C. Stolinsky in our Dec. 1997 issue

The Sovietization of American Women

Fragments of the old "iron law of wages" still operate. Doubling the potential labor supply by adding women to it reduces real wages toward half of what they were when men constituted the labor pool. It now takes two workers — husband and wife — to earn what is needed to support a family in modest comfort, when it used to take only one. We have come full circle from where we used to look down censoriously on Russian women doing hard physical labor in mines, mills, and factories. A look at our assembly lines and road crews reveals how we've sovietized American women.

— Prof. Rupert J. Ederer in our May 1999 issue

Insulting Pregnant Ladies

Utter strangers strike up conversations, and when they find out that this is not the "blessed" first child, not the "acceptable" second, and not the "you-must-be-crazy" third, but the "irresponsible" fourth or fifth, the conversations can turn into inquisitions laced with stinging remarks. But would they consider giving a lecture on more "responsible" use of the earth's resources to a person buying a vacation home or shopping for a third car? In an age when sensitivity and diversity are said to be prized, one of the last acceptable prejudices is against parents with many children.

— Kathleen Whitney Barr in our April 1999 issue

The Best Sex Ed Is No Sex Ed

There was little sex education in the schools in the 1950s, but there was also little teenage pregnancy. Pregnancy rates rose as sex education increased.

— David C. Stolinsky in our Dec. 1997 issue

Not so long ago there was an effective Christian sex education program. In it children were taught in the home about Heaven and Hell. Heaven is a wonderful place and everyone should want to go there. Fornication might send one to Hell. The teaching was direct and simple and — judging by statistical levels of sexual misbehavior and consequent misery — was effective.

— Joseph Collison in our Jan. 1999 issue

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of Professor Novak's disagreement with me on one issue. He certainly has a right to disagree, but his total lack of proportionality makes his piece an essay on his own views of one specific matter rather than a balanced review.

Prof. Novak claims that my treatment of homosexuality indicates that my difference from Reform "is one of degree rather than kind" and that I, unlike him, do not look to the tradition for authority or guidance. Yet he himself mentions that my position on abortion is both traditional and strongly against the stream of what contemporary Jews do. Moreover, Samuel Klagsbrun, in his review of my book in *Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Responsibility* (January 1999), complains that I am much too conservative in arguing that assisted suicide should never be allowed. The question, then, is not norms or no norms; it is rather *which* norms. Reasonable people committed to the Jewish tradition can, and always have, disagreed in their interpretation and application of it in specific areas.

Prof. Novak claims that in using the word "ideology" I had Leo Strauss' use of that term in mind and that therefore I have uprooted myself from a grounding in either nature or theology. Nothing could be further from the truth. Strauss' use of the term is specific to his own theories. I was simply using the term in accord with two of the four meanings listed in *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary*. The first definition listed there is "the study of ideas, their nature and source." The fourth definition is "the doctrines, opinions, or way of thinking of an individual, class, etc." I used the term "ideology" in its usual, dictionary sense rather than in Strauss' idiosyncratic usage.

Prof. Novak claims that I have unfairly characterized the Christian understanding of the nature of the human being and that, in fact, Christianity and Judaism have much in common on that and other issues. The two religions do indeed have many values in common, and I personally have been heavily involved in exploring that not only in my writing, but also in my extensive interfaith activities over the past twenty-five years. I mention this because I certainly do not come from a position of "Christian-bashing." At the same time, while Prof. Novak is correct in saying that Maimonides wanted Jews to suppress the desires of the body, that, I would submit, is the Greek rather that the Jew in him.

In any case, the important thing to note is not what individual theologians have suggested, but rather what the theory and practice of the overwhelming majority of thinkers and practitioners of the two religions have been. On this issue, I would simply point to the long and pervasive history of Christian asceticism, a phenomenon that has scant Jewish parallels. Yes, the two traditions do share some perceptions and some values, but they also differ in a number of ways, and not just on Jesus: they differ also, I would submit, on the predominant understanding of how one is to understand the body and soul and how one is to react to the body's urges.

I clearly know and stated several times over that the Torah and Rabbis were opposed to homosexuality. I even stated openly that most within my own Conservative movement do not agree with me on this issue. Prof. Novak may surely disagree with my arguments, but that is very different from suggesting that I have deliberately tried to mislead people—a charge that is both untrue and defamatory.

Elliot Dorff
University of Judaism
Los Angeles, California

David Novak replies:

It is understandable why Elliot Dorff didn't like my review of his book. No author likes sharp criticism. However, I stand by everything I said. His stand on homosexuality, even if only a small portion of his book, is the exception that proves the rule. By so cavalierly dismissing as unjust the traditional Jewish ban on homosexual acts—a ban undisputed throughout the whole history of Jewish law—he shows that this whole tradition is not normative for him, but only the source of selective guidance or misguidance. This is Reform Judaism, which Re-

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form Jews at least admit is not a continuation of Normative Judaism. If Professor Dorff had only admitted that he is not really a halakhic (that is, traditionally normative) Jewish thinker, I would have reviewed his book very differently, differing with its view of Judaism to be sure, but not on grounds of inner inconsistency.

Who's Obtuse?

I was taken aback to read Richard John Neuhaus' comments (While We're At It, December 1999) on my April 1999 article in *Commentary* and my response to Eugene Fisher in the letters section of the same journal (June/July) concerning the distinction between the Church as a human institution and as "the Mystical Body of Christ." First of all, Mr. Neuhaus can rest assured that as far as I am concerned, Catholics who wish to do so have every right to believe that the Church is sinless in a sacramental, transcendent sense. But why should it be "obtuse" on my part to point out that such a belief is scarcely binding on Jews, Protestants, or other non-Catholics? Moreover, in what way is this distinction relevant to the historical questions arising from Pius XII's conduct during World War II and in relation to the Holocaust? Even Mr. Neuhaus seems to accept that as a human being, a Pope can make errors, pursue mistaken policies, or fail in his duty. Whether this was the case with Pope Pius XII is best left to cool-headed, judicious examination of *all* the evidence available, by an independent inquiry.

Hopefully, this contentious issue will be clarified by the joint efforts of Catholic and Jewish scholars who already began last December to review published Vatican archival material about World War II—an initiative that was first proposed by Cardinal Cassidy. As one of the six scholars selected for this task, I have agreed to serve on this commission both out of a general desire to help resolve this cloud hanging over Catholic-Jewish relations and, more specifically, because I believe that we should all be committed to finding out the truth irrespective of what we might like to believe.

I find it regrettable, uncharitable, and frankly disrespectful that Mr. Neuhaus should accuse me of "a serious disservice to the truth" because as a Jew I do not share a particular point of Catholic theological doctrine; worse still that he should imply that I was being deliberately "obtuse" in responding to Mr. Fisher—a scholar whom I respect—or in any way denigratory about Catholic beliefs. Theology *is* important but it should not be confused with historical research.

There is also a wider point that I wish some of my Catholic critics would take to heart before they rush to judgment. Surely, at the end of a blood-stained millennium in which religion has all too often been a divisive force, we need to rise above petty point-scoring and intemperate polemics to rediscover some of the common ground between Christians and Jews.

Robert S. Wistrich
Professor of Modern Jewish History
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

RJN replies:
This journal endorses wholeheartedly Robert S. Wistrich's positive sentiments. No publication of general interest does more in emphasizing "the common ground between Christians and Jews." It is not the case, however, that in his remarks in *Commentary* Professor Wistrich affirmed his respect for the Catholic belief that the Church is, in a sacramental and transcendent sense, sinless. On the contrary, he charged that the distinction, suggested by Eugene Fisher, between the Church as institution and the Church as the Body of Christ "is exactly as I feared" and means that "the Vatican's final position on the Church's 'errors and failures' would be to hold ordinary Christians responsible while maintaining that the institution itself was blameless." Whether or not he was being obtuse, this was a serious disservice to the truth. I am pleased that he has clarified his position, and wish him and the other scholars on the commission the very best in their important work.

Correction

We are grateful to those alert readers who chided us for factual errors about Alabama (Edward T. Oakes, "Shakespeare's Millennium," December 1999). Neither the boll weevil statue nor the statehouse is in Birmingham. The boll weevil monument is in Enterprise and the statehouse in Montgomery—which is not only the state capital but also home of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival.

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The First Ten Years

Upon rereading the following editorial, which may be viewed as a statement of purpose and hope, there is little that we would change. What we set forth as our prejudices then are our prejudices now. We might frame a couple of items differently. After all, we have learned something over these years. But, all in all, the course is steady as she goes. The adventure of these ten years has taken us into areas we had not anticipated, and that will undoubtedly continue to be the case in the years ahead. Whether the initial intention has been vindicated or falsified by the subsequent one hundred issues is perhaps for others to judge. We have tried to do what we set out to do, and will try to do it better. Certainly the response to First Things *has been much greater and more favorable than we expected. This is true in the size of readership, the documentable influence of the journal, and the number of people eager to write for us. After the first issue, people said it was great but doubted that there would be material of that quality to meet the demands of a monthly publication. We were not sure about that ourselves, but that has turned out to be the least of our concerns. When it comes to quality submissions, we receive many times more than we can publish. Ten years later, more attention and, generally speaking, more informed attention is being paid the questions entailed by "religion and public life." We may be excused for thinking that* First Things *has had something to do with that. In any event, these first ten years have produced a large and growing community of readers, writers, and generous supporters, and for that we are deeply grateful. What we said at the start we say now: "We very much hope that you will be part of the continuing conversation, and we invite you to hold us to our word."*

— The Editors

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FIRST THINGS
MARCH 1990

Putting First Things First

"When in the course of human events . . ." Thus Jefferson and his associates, evincing a "decent respect to the opinions of mankind," began their explanation of what they were up to. To be sure, launching a new journal is not on a par with launching a new nation. Nor do we have any illusions that the whole of mankind will be paying attention to what we are up to here. But a decent respect for the opinion of those who do notice calls for a word of explanation.

This is a statement of editorial prejudices. Prejudices, rightly understood, are prior judgments. They are the considered assumptions that frame what we're going to do and how we're going to do it. We would be very unhappy if anyone thought us entirely open-minded. Our judgment that this or that is true and important inescapably prejudices us against judgments to the contrary.

At the same time, we do not expect that all our readers will share our prejudices. If everyone shared our prejudices, there would be neither purpose nor pleasure in launching a journal. Nor will our considered assumptions—about religion, public life, politics, economics, moral discourse, the arts, and how the world works—be evident in every article. Indeed, the purpose and pleasure of a journal is in engaging alternative assumptions.

Our prejudices will decide the arguments worth making, not the conclusions that writers reach. We fully expect that among our writers and readers will be believing Jews and Christians, agnostics, atheists, the politically liberal and conservative (with all the subcategories attending both), and people with wildly divergent views of the civilization of which we are part. One thing we expect they will have in common, however. They are people who are persuaded, or are open to being persuaded, of the importance of religion to public life, and of public life to religion. That said, we offer a brief statement of editorial prejudices.

Religion and public life. The trick is in making the right connections between the two. And making the right connections requires a measure of clarity about what we mean by "religion" and what we mean by "public life."

Those meanings and connections have everything to do with the title of this journal. First Things means, first, that the first thing to be said about public life is that public life is not the first thing. First Things means, second, that there are first things, in the sense of first principles, for the right ordering of public life.

The first meaning of First Things is that, for the sake of both religion and public life, religion must be given priority. While religion informs, enriches, and provides a moral foundation for public life, the chief purpose of religion is not to serve public life. Here we discover a necessary paradox. Religion that is captive to public life is of little public use. Indeed, such captivity produces politicized religion and religionized politics, and the result, as we know from bitter historical experience, is tragedy for both religion and public life.

Religion best serves public life by relativizing the importance of public life, especially of public life understood as politics. Authentic religion keeps the political enterprise humble by reminding it that it is not the first thing. By directing us to the ultimate, religion defines the limits of the penultimate. By illumining our highest purpose all lesser purposes are brought under transcendent judgment.

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That highest purpose can be variously defined, but believing Jews and Christians might agree that it was well defined in the answer to the famous opening question of the Westminster Catechism of 1647. The question is, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." It is hard to improve on that. Temporal tasks are best conducted in the light of eternal destiny. Religion points us to the last things, framing the final direction that informs our decisions about life, both personal and public. The chief service of religion, then, is to teach us that the first things are the last things.

By religion and public life we mean something like what St. Augustine meant by the City of God and the City of Man. The twain inevitably do meet, but they must never be confused or conflated. Whether at the beginning of the fifth century or at the end of the twentieth, the particulars of their meeting are always ambiguous. At the deepest level the two cities are in conflict, but, along the way toward history's end, they can be mutually helpful. The polis constituted by faith delineates the horizon, the possibilities and the limits, of the temporal polis. The first city keeps the second in its place, warning it against reaching for the possibilities that do not belong to it. At the same time, it elevates the second city, calling it to the virtue and justice that it is prone to neglect. Thus awareness of the ultimate sustains the modest dignity of the penultimate.

It is our further prejudice that public life includes much more than politics. Public life means, first of all, "culture." Our subtitle could as well be "a journal of religion and culture," except that culture has come to have a narrower meaning in popular usage, referring mainly to what is done in theaters, concert halls, and museums. We will not ignore the cultural in that narrower meaning of the term, but by culture we mean something more inclusive. Culture means the available truth claims, explanatory systems, myths, stories, memories, loyalties, dreams, and nightmares by which a society lives. Culture is the cognitive, moral, aesthetic, and emotive air that we breathe.

So we think it true to say that politics is, in largest part, an expression of culture, and at the heart of culture is religion. Politics is the effort to give just order to public life, employing the ideas made available by the culture. And the most communally binding of those ideas are by nature religious, whether or not they bear the label "religion." Given these considered assumptions, readers should not be surprised when in these pages they come across articles and arguments that are not ostensibly "religious" in the conventional use of the term. One does not always need to talk about God to be talking about God.

But there will also be talk about God. The intellectual, spiritual, and political fonts of our civilizational story are Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome. Modern thought, especially political thought, is notoriously neglectful of Jerusalem. This poses a particular problem for the public discourse in our society. In the West, and most notably in America, the civilizational story is borne by and legitimated by the language of Jerusalem. If the American experiment in representative democracy is not in conversation with biblical religion, it is not in conversation with what the overwhelming majority of Americans profess to believe is the source of morality. To the extent that our public discourse is perceived to be indifferent or hostile to the language of Jerusalem, our social and political order faces an ever deepening crisis of legitimacy.

And so another prejudice must be made explicit. Especially in our high culture, it is taken as axiomatic that ours is a secular society or is rapidly becoming such. In our judgment, that proposition has everything going for it except the empirical evidence. For more than three centuries perceptive observers have been struck by the vitality and pervasiveness of religion in American life. Americans appear to be incorrigibly religious, and the evidence suggests that they are becoming more so. However skeptical we may be about the quality of that religion, to ignore it is to ignore one of the most salient facts about American life.

Religion comes in many forms: Islam, Native American, New Age, feminist witchery, novel versions of Eastern spiritualities, and the vague national piety called civil religion, to name a few. But again, for the overwhelming majority of Americans religion is, however inarticulately, biblical religion. For most purposes relevant to our purpose, that means Christianity and Judaism. We will pay careful attention to the manifold expressions of religion in America and the world. But this journal, like the Institute that is its publisher, is essentially a Jewish-Christian enterprise. The intention of the enterprise is to advance a religiously grounded public philosophy for this and other experiments in human freedom.

In our catalogue of prejudices, a free and democratic order includes pluralism. Pluralism is a much abused term. It is often suggested that, because we are a pluralistic society, we must play down our differences, pretending that our deepest differences make no difference. That, in our judgment, is not pluralism at all. It is the opposite of pluralism. It is the monism of indifference. Pluralism is

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not relativism, and it is the declared enemy of nihilism. Pluralism is the civil engagement of our differences and disagreements about what is most importantly true. Against the monism that denies the variety of truth, against the relativism that denies the importance of truth, and against the nihilism that denies the existence of truth, we intend to nurture a pluralism that revives and sustains the conversation about what really matters, which is the truth.

Recognizing the difficulties in fulfilling that intention, we take comfort from this story. Once in Chelm, the mystical village of the East European Jews, a man was appointed to sit at the village gate and wait for the Messiah. He complained to the village elders that his pay was too low. "You are right," they said to him. "The pay is low. But consider: the work is steady."

These, then, are some of our prejudices. There are others, of course. We do not, for instance, think that intellectual seriousness is an excuse for being dull. Articles will be scholarly, but not pedantic; thoughtful, but not boring; often unusual, but not esoteric. We hope to attract a general, but literate, readership, well knowing that literacy is not so general as we might wish.

In these pages the reader will find items that report, analyze, instruct, warn, exhort, and sometimes entertain. But the key word is conversation. A real conversation, as distinct from intellectual chatter, is marked by discipline and continuity. Gilbert Keith Chesterton observed that "tradition is the democracy of the dead." Agreeing with that, we intend to take on the questions of today and tomorrow, but always in conversation with the best that has been thought and said in the past. At every historical moment, the contemporary is afflicted by the crippling conceit of its utter novelty. We hope First Things will be an antidote to that intellectual and moral disease.

When in the course of human events something new is launched, a decent respect for the opinion of others calls for a word of explanation. Of course this brief statement of what we're up to will be vindicated or falsified by this and subsequent issues of First Things. We very much hope that you will be part of the continuing conversation, and we invite you to hold us to our word. FT

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THIS TIME

In the Beginning

James Nuechterlein

Anniversaries are occasions for nostalgic celebration, for recalling to oneself and others how it is that this good thing came to be. As one who was present at the creation of this journal, I am pleased to mark its tenth birthday—though vaguely distressed to note how rapidly a decade can pass. (A decade here, a decade there, and the next thing you know you're talking real time.) I also have to confess that my memories of how FIRST THINGS came to be, and of how I came to be part of it, are not solely celebratory.

Things began for me, in fact, in embarrassment. It was the summer of 1988, and I was teaching at Valparaiso University and editing its journal of opinion, the *Cresset*. I was content where I was and expected to remain there until retirement. Then one day I received a general notice from Richard John Neuhaus, then Editor-in-Chief of the distinguished quarterly *This World*, announcing the imminent retirement of the journal's current Editor and asking for suggestions for a successor. No names came to mind, and I laid the notice aside without further thought. Not long afterward, I received a call from RJN. Enter the embarrassment. He wanted to see if I had names to suggest, but somehow I got the idea that he was sounding *me* out for the job. When it became clear that was not the case, I felt thoroughly foolish and ended the conversation as soon as I decently could.

But my gaffe, as it turned out, planted a seed in his mind, and not long afterward I received another call from him, and this time he *was* sounding me out for the job. So it was that after a brief but intense period of agonizing, I found myself in January 1989 resident in Manhattan and ensconced as Editor of *This World*.

It turned out to be a very short career. Our relations with the midwestern institute that sponsored our work had always been problematic. The institute's officers thought the New York office cost too much money, and, more important, their paleoconservative instincts coexisted uneasily with our perceived neocon tendencies. Just how uneasily I learned with a vengeance when, on the morning of May 5, 1989—a date that will live in infamy—the president of the institute, accompanied by a number of stone-faced associates, showed up in our office and informed the five of us on staff that we had two hours to gather our belongings and vacate the premises. (You can learn the sordid details by consulting back issues of the *New York Times* and assorted journals of opinion, as well as RJN's essay on the subject in *The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics*, Mitchell S. Muncy, ed. [Spence, 1997].) We were, as you might expect, thoroughly stunned: the best I could come up with in response was, "I suppose this means no Christmas bonus."

So shortly thereafter we stood dazed on a street corner in the rain, the large green garbage bags that held our personal effects clutched in our hands, wondering what we would do for lunch and for the rest of our lives. Lunch was easy: we repaired to a neighborhood Italian restaurant and enjoyed a defiantly celebratory feast, the "raid lunch" that we have marked on that date every year since. As for the rest of our lives, we got on with them almost immediately, thanks largely to the resourcefulness of our once and future Editor-in-Chief. RJN quickly found new sources of funding and we set up our own institute, something we had in fact been moving toward even before the raid.

The idea at first was that we would reconstitute ourselves along familiar lines. We would begin a new quarterly, and RJN would continue to produce, as he had been doing for years, a monthly newsletter surveying the world of religion and public life. But then, in the endless conversations that accompanied the new venture, an alternative idea emerged. Why not combine the things we had been doing separately in one new monthly package?

I was appalled. My all-too-brief career as Editor of *This World* (one issue—a splendid one, I thought) had been most satisfactory. Editing a quarterly is a gentlemanly enterprise, one allowing for careful planning and extensive reflection (read: long lunches and lots of goofing off). What gentleman, on the other hand, would want to involve himself in the relentless deadlines and endless crises that accompany a monthly publishing schedule?

But RJN, reinforced by the advice of many trusted colleagues, was insistent, and though I mounted every argument I could think of against the proposal, I knew, deep down, that he was right. The plan to bring together our earlier efforts promised an effective editorial mix, and, other things being equal, a monthly is more likely to impress itself on

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the public mind than a quarterly. Thus the birth, my protests to the contrary notwithstanding, of First Things.

The response to FT, both in circulation and in enthusiasm, exceeded our most extravagant hopes, and I soon got over the nervous backward looks to Valparaiso University that the adventures of my first months away from the place had induced. This was, I knew virtually from the start, the best job I'd ever had—gentlemanly or not. My farewell to the classroom came entirely without tears.

But the beginning of FT did not mean the end of unsettling times. Just a few months after the first issue had appeared, RJN asked me into his office and closed the door. He had decided, he told me, to become a Roman Catholic priest—after a period of preparation, Pastor Richard would become Father Richard. The news shook me, though I should have seen it coming. Only three years earlier, after all, he had published *The Catholic Moment*: why should it surprise me that he would make that moment his own? But surprise me it did—largely, I think, because I had been so caught up in the idea of our working together to further the cause of the evangelical catholic Lutheranism that his earlier writings had taught me to embrace. I knew I could not follow him to Rome, and in the subsequent weeks and months we had a number of those conversations that diplomats characterize as "a full and frank exchange of views."

But over time I learned that we could still work together on collegial terms. On those infrequent occasions over the years when we have disagreed on the merits of a manuscript, for example, the disagreement has seldom involved whether or not the essay reflected a Catholic sensibility. I hadn't envisioned an ecumenical relationship, but it has worked out well.

As with RJN, so also with my associations with the other editors whose names have graced our masthead—men and women whose abilities I have depended on and whose friendships I cherish. I count it an extraordinary grace to have spent the last ten years at a place where the environment has been as congenial as the work has been fulfilling. FT

Annas

(to Caiaphas)

This man's Judean? So he must be taught
himself and thereby feel God in his heart
(we well know how that can sting)
and the things Antipas won't forgive,
a slander or a misplaced name. This one's
words could someday return to him. . . .
He must regard his place, remember ours,
keep the Sabbath and remember this,
and pray. You know how some mistakes arise
from being too blind or too literal, faithful.
Remember, one can be *almost* right.
Remember how he's certain and persuades
(and so far removed from yet so similar)
about our mystery. Show him the way.

Neil Azevedo

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Opinion

Can We Have a Story?

Robert W. Jenson

Some time ago I published in this journal an essay on "How the World Lost Its Story" (October 1993). Modernity's project, I said with great unoriginality, was the attempt to maintain the Bible's grasp of reality while dispensing with the Bible's God. The long reading of Scripture in the West taught us—including those who did not notably obey Scripture—to perceive reality Scripture's way, as a history that makes a whole because it has a conclusion and so a plot. The modern West tried to inhabit this world while believing no Teller of the story.

"Modernism" (if you are in the art-historical discourse) or "postmodernism" (if you are in the culture-diagnostic discourse) is merely the self-conscious collapse of modernity's project. It is the despairing or gleeful recognition that you cannot very well have a drama without a dramatist. The recognition should not, of course, have been quite so long in coming, but humanity has a notable capacity for persistence in self-deception. If God is not, or is of deist persuasion and entertains no histories, that leaves only two possibilities: either we are to make up the world's story, or the world just happens to have one. The latter possibility is remarkably implausible. As to the former, postmodernism proclaims the further unsurprising discovery that whatever universal stories we make up, whatever "metanarratives," must be oppressive.

Then, more recently, I reviewed here T. J. Clark's history of modernist painting (October 1999). Clark's diagnosis is very much like mine. Clark construes modernist painting—not modern painting, which begins much earlier—as prophecy of a world freed from the bourgeois passion for comprehensible wholes, a world whose actual advent turns out, alas, to make no room for painting. The present moment is, he thinks, a "travesty" of the prophesied heaven, and hellish for art. Nevertheless, Clark wants to be hopeful: what we are in is not permanent hell but only "purgatory." Unfortunately, Clark can give no account of this hope that is in him.

With this pair of First Things pieces behind me, I thought I might revisit the subject at the journal's anniversary. So: can we have a story again?

It is not of course that there are no metanarratives still around. Modernity's social-political story—running from initial situation through contract, fictive or actual, to the liberal society—retains its rule over our political self-understanding. And to very different effect, reality is forcing the hard sciences into story form. This would be a welcome development, if only popularizers did not make science's story itself another metanarrative.

The framework of the biological sciences has been narrative at least since Darwin. The implications of this have been disguised by the ideological insistence that below the narrative there must be deterministic mechanism. This ideology has no evidential basis, but is nevertheless taught in seventh grade as "what science tells us."

More remarkably, physics also assumes story form. The universe goes from big bang to big crunch/whimper; and at the other end of magnitude, we discover that an elementary particle just *is* its own history. Again ideologues among the scientists insist that a theory will yet be found that generates the cosmos and its story sheerly from timelessly underlying mathematics. Those not so desperate to avoid religion will be content to wait and see.

Moreover, postmodernist theories are themselves metanarratives. They are one and all stories about how it came to pass that we thought we had a story, and how we are now to be liberated from this delusion. (At an American Academy of Religion session a time or two ago, where the panelists were holding forth against oppressive hegemonic discourses, an elderly nonacademic finally interjected, "I wonder if you people know how you are oppressing me.") The form of these narratives is quite directly dependent on Scripture; they are narratives of fall and redemption.

Scientists generally believe their own narratives. Postmodernists are supposed not to. No one but John Rawls any longer believes modernity's social narrative, but we find none other to cling to. The joint effect is the problem. For the scientists' narratives do not seem to be about us, the political narrative no longer suffices, and the postmodernist narratives, which are obsessively about us, finally conjure spiraling contradiction. At the turn of the millennium, what awaits appears indeed to be an eschaton, Nietzsche's minus the superman—nihilism.

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What is to be done *within* church and synagogue seems relatively plain. God's people must gather the courage to subordinate other narratives to their own, to proclaim and live within a metanarrative that is "meta" in superlative degree. If the story the Bible tells, running from creation to consummation and plotted by Exodus or Exodus-Resurrection, is *true*, it is not just our story but God's. If it is God's story, it is universal. And if it is the *triune* God's story, it cannot be oppressive.

Astrophysical cosmology and evolutionary narrative do not tell the encompassing story within which all others must be construed. For all this story's melodrama, it is an abstraction of reality, and believers must have the gall to say this, indeed to say that such abstraction touches reality only as it is construed within the story of God and His creation. Modernity's political narrative is not the comprehensive story within which the Church must be assigned its place. On the contrary, Augustine was right: the polities of this world are feeble imitations, for emergency conditions, of the divine polity.

If the coming period is to be any special period in the history of God's people, it will be the time when we are at once reduced to a sect and forced to claim universality with unprecedented boldness, when we must openly and intentionally be tellers of a particular story that is either a fairy tale or the comprehensive truth. If the turn of millennium indeed is anything special, it is the moment when God's people will have no choice but to summon such chutzpah and live by it.

Will we do it? Yes, because Hell's gates cannot prevail. Will any particular segment of God's people do it? Not necessarily; there is no promise that, e.g., American Protestantism will not disappear or adopt for good and all the mask of Nietzsche's "last man."

Will the world itself have a story? God knows. Perhaps there is indeed to be a penultimate end of history, not an end of newspaper events but a global imposition of storyless procedural society, of Clark's "purgatory." In any case, church and synagogue, in charity for humankind, must pray against such a time of trial and meanwhile do what we can for our fellows.

We can but make the claim. We can note the postmodernist critique of metanarratives, and then offer a narrative that, because it is about God and us at once, is of a different species altogether. Will there be enough people in the world who entertain this obviously self-serving offer to make a difference? God knows. We can strengthen the voices of those in the scientific community who are considering the implications and possibilities of their disciplines' transformation into narrative; and we can actually produce such accounts of God's history with creation as show the truth and benefit of the sciences' stories. Will this suffice for the culture to acquire a new version of "what science says," a version that helps folk inhabit a coherent history rather than hinders it? God knows. We can not only expose the mythic character of modernity's social narrative—this is anyway almost universally admitted—but as synagogue and church display how there can be a polity shaped not only by measures to alleviate the love of domination, but also by love for the good. Will enough of the world look and emulate to make a difference? God knows.

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The Democratization of Science

Barry Harvey

"It is degrading to an American to take everything on trust, and even the young farmer and tradesman should scorn to surrender their right of judging either to lawyers or priests." According to Nathan Hatch, professor of American religious history at the University of Notre Dame, this kind of populist sentiment—expressed in 1803 by the New England politician and polemicist Benjamin Austin, Jr.—represents the salient contribution of American religion to the formation of our cultural ethos. "The democratic revolution of the early republic sent external religious authority into headlong retreat," writes Hatch in *The Democratization of American Christianity*,

> and elicited from below powerful visions of faith that seemed more authentic and self-evident. These new expressions of faith, fed by passions of ordinary men and women, did not merely diverge from received authority; increasingly they failed even to take into account the standard theological categories

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that served as guides for religious experience and formed the common denominator of theological discussion between disputants.

Hatch's thesis came to mind as I listened to media pundits who lamented the decision of the Kansas Board of Education to remove questions about evolution, natural selection, and Big Bang cosmology from mandatory state tests. Syndicated editorial writer Anthony Lewis, for example, takes to task the members of the board for being enslaved to archaic ideas and institutions, and thus "locked in rigid certainties and shibboleths." Lewis predictably lays the blame for this decision solely at the feet of a religious fundamentalism that would substitute "creation science" for the standards of modern biology and physics. Lewis is not alone in making religious fundamentalism the scapegoat. The recent "Humanist Manifesto: A Call for a New Planetary Humanism" (*Free Inquiry*, Fall 1999) also takes aim at "the emergence of shrill fundamentalist voices and the persistence of bigotry and intolerance" which all too often inculcate "unrealistic, escapist, otherworldly approaches to social problems, . . . a disrespect for science, and . . . archaic social institutions."

What seems particularly troublesome to these critics is the fact that the reaction against modern scientific method is not limited to a few misguided lunatics at the fringes of society. Lewis cites a Gallup poll taken in June 1999 which indicated that a rather large majority of Americans favored the teaching of both evolution and so-called creation science, and that a substantial minority (40 percent) supported eliminating evolutionary theory altogether and teaching creationism alone. He reluctantly concludes that "most of us" were wrong to think that antipathy towards the teaching of evolution had been defeated several decades ago at the Scopes trial. How can it be, Lewis asks, that such a large body of opinion in the United States holds to a view so at odds with standard science, particularly when no other Western country has anything like it?

I would submit that Lewis unwittingly supplies the answer to his own question. The pervasive "rejection" of the scientific method that has him so concerned represents the next logical step in the evolution of American culture—the democratization of science. Just as American citizens have been free to choose those religious beliefs that best suit their personal tastes, they are now declaring that they are free to select whatever form of scientific belief they prefer. If the Gallup poll is a reliable indication, the fact that these preferences run counter to the scientific establishment really does not concern most people a great deal. (Indeed, the fact that the results of a poll are introduced as evidence in a debate is a sure sign that some sort of populist movement is at work here.) What could be more American, more democratic, more egalitarian, than every individual making up her or his own mind regardless of what the so-called experts say? If religious convictions are now little more than expressions of consumer preference, why not treat scientific beliefs the same way?

The notion of popular sovereignty, which exalted the powers of judgment of ordinary people over those of elites, was a powerful catalyst for the breakup of traditional society in America. The influence of religious populism greatly increased the circle of people who thought themselves capable of thinking for themselves about issues of freedom, equality, sovereignty, and representation. The primacy of the individual conscience was the one common trait in the midst of an otherwise fragmented religious scene that, as Hatch puts it, "combined odd mixtures of high and popular culture, of renewed supernaturalism and Enlightenment rationalism, of mystical experiences and biblical literalism, of evangelical and Jeffersonian rhetoric." In the process, the procedures, social institutions, and virtues that comprise a republican civil order gave way to vulgar democracy, unconstrained (and frequently uninformed) self-expression, and materialistic individualism.

Of course, as long as populist sentiment was confined to the areas of religion, commerce, and politics, few in the scientific world were concerned. But why should such a powerful force remain restricted to these areas of life? If it is degrading to young farmers and tradesmen to surrender their right of judging either to lawyers or priests, why should they willingly surrender it to scientists? And even if some wanted to offer what they regarded as good reasons for restricting populist sentiment, to whom would they address their arguments, and by whose standards would they be evaluated? In short, why should the sciences be immune to the contagion of populism?

If in fact what we are now witnessing is the migration of religious populism to matters of science, then indeed we are faced with a most ironic situation. For over two centuries the more "enlightened" in our midst regarded the breakdown of traditional institutions of authority within Christianity as a good thing. They took the lack of consensus among the fragments of medieval Christendom, combined that lack

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with the manifest differences between the various religions, and concluded that religious practices and convictions were at best expressions of private sentiment completely lacking in rational warrants and therefore properly kept out of the public realm. Many went further, branding all religious expression as simply nonsense, a remnant of a primitive and irrational worldview that somehow has survived into modern times on false pretenses.

The modern illuminati did not for a moment consider their own standpoint at risk. After all, they were enlightened; they believed in reason, in science. Who could reasonably doubt these? They did not foresee the ways in which the instrumental modes of rationality cultivated by the Enlightenment—which not only greet all claims to knowledge with skepticism, but also treat accepted means for adjudicating the value of those claims with suspicion—actually erode the capacity of reason to order our lives together. And so it is that in matters of religion and science populism expropriated the Cartesian method of radical doubt and elevated it into an art form. Hatch's observation that "dissenters confounded the establishment with an approach to theological matters that was nothing short of guerrilla warfare" thus illuminates the inability of most scientists to respond in persuasive fashion to the debate about natural selection and the Big Bang.

To be sure, at one level standard scientific methodology treats any particular assertion as a hypothesis that must be tested experimentally. But scientists have never really been prepared to justify their disciplines in the face of radical skepticism exercised by ordinary people, particularly in connection with questions that extend beyond matters of technical utility. The "Humanist Manifesto," for example, simply asserts without argument that the methods of science, while not infallible, are "on balance . . . the most reliable methods we have for expanding knowledge and solving human problems." But which scale shall we use to weigh this claim of reliability? What assures us of this scale's probity? Who may speak authoritatively on this subject? Karl Popper, whose devotion to science has never been questioned, conceded that in this respect "all science rests upon shifting sand."

For a time the social standing of the sciences was protected from the corrosive effects of modern conceptions of rationality because the ideas of Reason, Enlightenment, and Progress were themselves shibboleths of the American mythos. But the bards are now directing the faithful to worship at the altars of other gods: Choice, Consumption, Market Share, Individual Well-Being. The Promethean figures of this myth no longer inhabit the laboratory or the observatory, but Madison Avenue and Silicon Valley, Disney World and Hollywood. Scientists have been expelled from the sacred heights, cast down to earth where they must muddle along with the rest of us mortals.

How should those of us who do not identify with either party in this dispute respond to it? First, we should be excused if we momentarily delight in the fact that science must now deal with the guerrilla tactics of populist sense and sensibility with which religious authorities have had to contend for over two centuries. Moreover, we should acknowledge that there is something distinctly healthy about a populist skepticism that refuses to accept as indisputable the contention that human beings are nothing but the products of "an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable, and natural process," as a 1995 statement by the National Association of Biology Teachers put it. (The statement has since been revised after several scholars pointed out the philosophical and theological assumptions involved in the first two claims.) I am not suggesting that we give serious credence to "creation science," which is neither good science nor a good theology of creation (as admirably demonstrated by William E. Carroll in "Aquinas and the Big Bang," FT, November 1999). We just need to recognize that on more than one occasion people have done the right thing for the wrong reason.

On the other hand, we also need to recognize that there are serious problems with populism as a social and political movement. More specifically, the manifest ability of populist movements to resist the arbitrary imposition of authority never successfully translates into the wherewithal to cultivate institutions, practices, and habits that can sustain true human flourishing over time. By itself populism acts as a social solvent that gradually strips a community of the habits and practices it needs for the cultivation of civic-minded citizenship, leaving in their place an unconstrained and self-centered desire to consume. And as Hatch points out, populism also opens the door to the influence of rogues and demagogues whose sensitivity to the concerns of ordinary people and whose rhetorical skill in taking advantage of those concerns make for a potent combination.

If a persuasive case is to be made for the practice of science within the common life of American society, we must attend to social institutions, traditions of inquiry, and conceptions of the good that extend far beyond the confines and purview of the laboratory and lecture hall. But that is the problem. When Enlightenment rationality dissolved public confi-

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dence in the traditions and social institutions that had underwritten religious belief for centuries, and called into question the communal lineaments of moral thought and practice, most scientists saw no threat to their disciplines and therefore were not concerned. They did not realize that a social process had begun that would eventually turn its sights on the authority of scientific methods—and now there are few people left to be concerned.

In the short term I do not expect many scientists to recognize that they have common cause with religious authorities. Nor do I see any time soon a general revival of those institutions and dispositions that could cultivate the level of civic-minded citizenry that is needed. The best hope lies with those who realize that religion, morality, politics, and science share a common fate with respect to questions of authority, and that attention to one cannot be sustained at the expense of the others. In particular, those institutions of learning which do not take it as self-evident that religious and moral convictions are subjective expressions of emotional preference, or that the wisdom of the past (which both religious populism and science reject out of hand) has no bearing on current inquiries, are in the best position to take up this conversation in new and fruitful ways.

There is a risk that comes with participating in this conversation, which some scientists may intuitively recognize and thus resist. Such discussion will invariably open up the methods and aims of scientific research to critical scrutiny of a sort that most practicing scientists have avoided for the greater part of this century. They have shunned it for any number of reasons, including simply pragmatic considerations in a profession that already makes incredible demands on their time. Some scientists, however, rightly suspect that engaging in such dialogue means surrendering the epistemic privilege that the Enlightenment uncritically accorded their disciplines and discourses. The spirited disputation that would likely ensue is indeed daunting, especially for those unaccustomed to working on an intellectual frontier where there are few if any unquestioned protocols and procedures. The only alternative, I fear, is continued guerrilla warfare, with every young farmer, tradesman, and professional choosing for himself which beliefs to accord the exalted title of "science."

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Rethinking the Crusades

Jonathan Riley-Smith

On July 15, 1999, the nine-hundredth anniversary of the fall of Jerusalem to the crusaders, a party of Christians paraded round the city walls to publicize a personal apology on behalf of their religion to Muslims. They wanted to make a conciliatory gesture, on the one hand, and on the other to express contrition for wars they believe should be included in the category of events Pope John Paul II calls departures from the spirit of Christ and his gospel. To accept blame humbly when one is at fault is always good, of course, but in this case the apologizers were only showing that they did not comprehend the Muslim view of the crusades (which made their conciliatory gesture empty) and did not understand history (which made their act of contrition pointless).

Crusades were war-pilgrimages proclaimed by the Popes on Christ's behalf and waged for the recovery of Christian territory or people, or in their defense. Each crusader made a vow, signified by the wearing of a cloth cross, and he (or she) was rewarded with the grant of an indulgence and certain temporal privileges. A distinguishing feature of crusading was that the cross was enjoined on men and women not as a service, but as a penance, the association of which with war had been made about a decade before the First Crusade. While holy war had had a long history, the idea of penitential war was unprecedented in Christian thought. It meant that a crusade was for the crusader only secondarily about service in arms to God or benefiting the Church or Christianity; it was primarily about benefiting himself. He was engaged in an act of self-sanctification.

Crusading generated two institutional mutations: military orders, the members of which were not crusaders, being permanently as opposed to temporarily engaged in the defense of Christendom and sometimes operating out of theocratic order-states like Prussia, Rhodes, and Malta; and crusade leagues, which were alliances of certain frontline powers, the forces of which were granted crusade privileges.

The movement lasted a very long time, from the preaching of the First Crusade in 1095 to the fall of the last order-state, Hospitaller Malta, to Napoleon in 1798. It manifested itself in many the-

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atres of war: Palestine and the eastern Mediterranean region, of course, but also North Africa, Spain, the Baltic shores, Hungary, the Balkans, and even Western Europe. The Muslims were not the crusaders' only enemies, although they provided the opposition in North Africa and Spain as well as in Palestine and Syria, and, from the later fourteenth century onwards, in the Aegean and the Balkans. Crusaders were also engaged in campaigns against Pagan Wends, Balts and Lithuanians, Shamanist Mongols, Orthodox Russians and Greeks, Cathar and Hussite heretics, and Catholic political opponents of the papacy.

Some crusades, therefore, were "introspective" in that they were launched against fellow Christians. Holy war has the tendency, whatever the religion involved, to turn inwards sooner or later and to be directed against the members of the society that has generated it. The fear grows that any chance of victory may be vitiated by corruption or divisions at home, so that only when society is undefiled and is practicing uniformly true religion can a struggle on its behalf be successful.

From the Fourth Lateran Council in the early thirteenth century to the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth, every general council of the Church was officially summoned at least partly on the grounds that no crusade could be really successful without a reform of the Church and of Christendom. In the middle of the twelfth century Peter the Venerable, the influential abbot of Cluny, was prepared to state that violence against fellow religionists could be even more justifiable than the use of force against infidels. In 1208, calling for a crusade against the heretical Cathars with imagery of uncleanness and disease, Pope Innocent III summoned "knights of Christ . . . to wipe out the treachery of heresy and its followers by attacking the heretics with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, that much more confidently than you would attack the Muslims because they are worse than them." Introspective crusades were often seen as preliminary to war against Islam—men who had taken the cross for the East not infrequently found themselves pressured into commuting their vows in favor of internal police actions.

It has often been said that crusaders tended to behave particularly badly once they were in the field. That they could be undisciplined and capable of acts of great cruelty cannot be denied. The question, however, is whether the form of war in which they were engaged was a peculiarly horrible one. Recent work on the sack of Jerusalem in July 1099, one of the most notorious incidents and the one commemorated by those repentant modern Christians, is leading some historians to look at the evidence again. We know it to be a myth that the crusaders targeted the Jewish community in Jerusalem. We also know that the figure for the Muslim dead, which used to range from ten to seventy thousand on the basis of accounts written long after the event, ought to be revised downward. A contemporary Muslim source has been discovered that puts the number at three thousand. Three thousand men and women is still a lot of people, of course, but it is low enough to make one wonder why the Western eyewitnesses, who gloried in generalized descriptions of slaughter, felt the need to portray a bloodbath.

If, on the other hand, the behavior of the crusaders in the East cannot be considered to have been quantitatively worse than that of those fighting in any ideological war, the behavior of the crusaders in Europe could sometimes be abominable, even by the standards of the time. Before heading off to the Jerusalem crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, some Europeans "prepared themselves" through violent outbreaks of anti-Judaism in France, Germany, and England. During the crusades launched against fellow Christians or heretics, the most unpleasant examples of loss of discipline and control took place (the sacks of Constantinople in 1204 and of Béziers in 1209 spring to mind). If we are going to express contrition for the behavior of the crusaders, it is not so much to the Muslims that we should apologize, but to the Jews and to our fellow Christians.

But should we be apologizing at all? No crusade was actually proclaimed against the Jews, although crusade preaching unleashed feelings that the Church could not control. As far as crusading itself is concerned, most Muslims do not view the crusades, in which they anyway believe they were victorious, in isolation. Islam has been spasmodically in conflict with Christianity since the Muslim conquests of the seventh century, long before the First Crusade, and the crusading movement was a succession of episodes in a continuum of hostility between the two religions. Muslims do not seem to have considered until relatively recently that the crusades stood out in this history; by 1500, indeed, they would have been justified in believing that that particular sequence of wars was ending in their favor. They might have lost Spain, but the Ottoman conquests in Europe had far exceeded anything the crusaders had gained in the East. In the late nineteenth century, however, they began to regard the West's monopoly of commerce and colonialism as a change of tactics, in which everything the crusaders had lost to them was being more than regained. It follows that apologizing to them now can never, as far as they are concerned, get

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to the root of the problem, because the crusades are merely symptomatic of a much longer-term competitiveness. It is rather like a marksman aiming at an opponent and, while he fires his rifle, expressing regrets for his ancestor's use of a bow and arrow.

But for many of the Christian penitents, what the Muslims think is of secondary importance; it is the Church's subjective act of repentance for past sin that matters. While this kind of self-accusation may make them feel good about themselves, it is possible that, in diverting attention from the real issues, they are doing more harm than good. How useful is it to condemn wars that were supported by great saints like Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, John of Capistrano, even possibly Francis of Assisi, however abhorrent the ethical principles on which they were based appear to be to us? Ought we not rather challenge the widespread sentimental and unhistorical assumptions that on the one hand Christianity is an unambiguously pacific religion and on the other that Christian justifications of force have been consistent?

The consensus among Christians on the use of violence has changed radically since the crusades were fought. The just war theory prevailing for most of the last two centuries—that violence is an evil which can in certain situations be condoned as the lesser of evils—is relatively young. Although it has inherited some elements (the criteria of legitimate authority, just cause, right intention) from the older war theory that first evolved around A.D. 400, it has rejected two premises that underpinned all medieval just wars, including crusades: first, that violence could be employed on behalf of Christ's intentions for mankind and could even be directly authorized by him; and second, that it was a morally neutral force which drew whatever ethical coloring it had from the intentions of the perpetrators. Only in the sixteenth century did the nearly universal conviction that the use of violence depended on Christ's direct or indirect authority begin to be undermined. For the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria and his followers, particularly Suarez and Ayala, violence could be justified only in terms of the needs of the "common good," defined in relation to accepted earthly laws.

Just war arguments thus moved from the field of moral theology to that of law, a step taken within decades by Gentili and Grotius. Christ was withdrawing from the fray, at least as far as Enlightenment thinkers were concerned—the Encyclopédistes referred to the crusades as *ces guerres horribles*—but although they agreed that the use of force nearly always had evil consequences because of the suffering that accompanied it, they still regarded violence itself as being morally neutral. No one had yet taken the second step necessary for the emergence of "modern" just war theory, the conviction borrowed from pacifism that force is intrinsically evil—though conceding that it can nevertheless be condoned as a lesser evil. I do not know exactly when this change took place, but I suspect it was an achievement of the peace movement that swept Europe and America after the Napoleonic Wars and split into two wings, pacifist and moderate, in the 1830s.

From the fourth century, and especially from the eleventh to the nineteenth century, therefore, Christians considered violence in a quite different light than we do today. Our just war theory has become so embedded in our thinking that we forget that it represents a relatively short-lived departure from a much longer-lasting and more positive tradition. Time will tell whether that older tradition represents the norm, but a realization of this may come sooner rather than later, because there are several straws in the wind. The founding of the League of Nations and then the United Nations and the judgments at the Nuremberg trials encouraged the revival of concepts of natural law, manifesting themselves in the notion of crimes against humanity and an insistence on judgment by international tribunals. This seems to have set in motion a process that has now led to the waging of a war justified by its "humanitarian" aims.

This development, one should note, reverses the achievement of the sixteenth-century thinkers, by subordinating international law to natural law and by reintroducing ethical judgments to just war theory. It is beginning to look, moreover, as though the restoration of Christ to the position of an authorizer of violence, which was a feature of the militant Christian liberation theology in the 1960s and early 1970s, was not a flash in the pan but was part of this process of change.

That nineteenth-century just war theory may be giving way less than two centuries after it became the consensus indicates how unsatisfactory, philosophically and practically, it has proved itself to be. Within decades the problems raised by it were so intractable that lawyers began to concentrate on getting international agreement on rules of war that might ameliorate the suffering that accompanied conflict rather than on basic principles. Its fallibility was again revealed during the Nuremberg trials, in the more recent debates on proportionality with respect to nuclear deterrence, and in the extraordinarily confused justifications given for the Gulf War by some leading Christians.

I am fairly sure that those who are now demanding

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an apology for the crusades are themselves, without knowing it or understanding how rapidly the ground is shifting beneath them, sharing in a new consensus which is *au fond* not very far from the war theology they are condemning. A stance that justifies a "humanitarian" war on moral grounds has placed itself at least in the same field as that once occupied by crusade theorists. The language that demands that our ancestors be posthumously anathematized is not too distant from that of the men who wanted the corpse of Pope Boniface VIII to be exhumed and burnt. We may be entering a period of conceptual uncertainty about the most difficult of all society's dilemmas—when or when not to use force—and we need not emotion, but cool heads and an objective analysis of the past.

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The Essential Chesterton

David W. Fagerberg

It would no doubt be foolish to suggest that there is a single, essential contribution which Gilbert Keith Chesterton (1874-1936) can make to us from across the span of a century and a quarter since his birth. In the first place, how could one simplify a man of such complex talents? And in the second, would not everyone who patiently explains why Chesterton should be of interest to us in fact be explaining their own range of interests? Literary types would laud him for his poetry and novels and detective stories and plays; social critics would approve him for his prescient admonitions about eugenics and nihilism and socialism; champions of domestic democracy would like his doctrine of distributism; philosophers would be challenged by his insights into Thomas and Francis, and the quips he trades with Shaw and Blatchford; the fundamentalist Christian would defend him for defending Christianity, and the Catholic Christian would enjoy the enjoyment Chesterton derived from his Catholicism. This is a multifaceted man.

It is probably foolish, therefore, to attempt to identify an essential characteristic of Chesterton, but that is what this essay proposes. Although all successful writers would tell me that interests are idiosyncratic, and I should therefore identify a specific contribution Chesterton made in a specific field of interest, instead I seek to identify a universal feature that threads through all of Chesterton's above-listed avocations. I furthermore suggest that this feature is his principal boon to us.

Chesterton's modesty would have prevented him from claiming sainthood. It is I, not he, who shall compare his salutary effect with a saint's, but the point is true, nonetheless, that what he said about saints is perfectly and exactly applicable to himself: "The saint is a medicine because he is an antidote. Indeed that is why the saint is often a martyr; he is mistaken for a poison because he is an antidote. He will generally be found restoring the world to sanity by exaggerating whatever the world neglects, which is by no means always the same element in every age. Yet each generation seeks its saint by instinct; and he is not what the people want, but rather what the people need. . . . Therefore it is the paradox of history that each generation is converted by the saint who contradicts it most." The way in which Chesterton contradicts us most is by being a happy man. By this trait he can serve as our antidote, exaggerating what we neglect, supplying what we need, even if we do not know we do.

The happiness that pervades every word Chesterton writes is occasioned both by things and by people. In his hands, as in the hands of an artist, something is done to the ordinary world that enables the viewer to see its landscape and its citizens anew. "At the back of our brains, so to speak, there was a forgotten blaze or burst of astonishment at our own existence. The object of the artistic and spiritual life was to dig for this submerged sunrise or wonder; so that a man sitting in a chair might suddenly understand that he was actually alive, and be happy." To Chesterton, all things appear as wonderful parts of a thrilling fairyland. He retains an innocent, original delight in things instead of succumbing to the monotony that assails most of us as we grow older. It is adults who become bored with life; children find the world as exotic as a fairy tale. "Just as we all like love tales because there is an instinct of sex, we all like astonishing tales because they touch the nerve of the ancient instinct of astonishment. This is proved by the fact that when we are very young children we do not need fairy tales: we only need tales. Mere life

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is interesting enough. . . . These tales say that apples were golden only to refresh the forgotten moment when we found that they were green. They make rivers run with wine only to make us remember, for one wild moment, that they run with water."

Chesterton has the quixotic goal of remaining childlike even after growing up, because children escape the curse of being weary of wonders. If an artist (working in the medium of words) could revivify this sense, he could provide a magical view of things as ordinary as a London hansom cab or Fleet Street lamplight. "To the child the tree and the lamppost are as natural and as artificial as each other; or rather, neither of them are natural but both supernatural. For both are splendid and unexplained. The flower with which God crowns the one, and the flame with which Sam the lamplighter crowns the other, are equally of the gold of fairy tales."

It is the same with people. People are just as wonder-filled as things. In a letter to his fiancée, Frances, he confesses to being stained with ink from that day's work (a state of appearance at which Frances would probably not be surprised), and then thinks to add, "I like the Cyclostyle ink; it is so inky. I do not think there is anyone who takes quite such fierce pleasure in things being themselves as I do. The startling wetness of water excites and intoxicates me: the fieriness of fire, the steeliness of steel, the unutterable muddiness of mud. It is just the same with people. . . . When we call a man 'manly' or a woman 'womanly' we touch the deepest philosophy." Chesterton was pleased to make the acquaintance of various people, many people, any people. He even once thought it would be pleasing to make the acquaintance of all people:

> An Invitation.
> Mr. Gilbert Chesterton
> requests the pleasure
> Of humanity's company
> to tea on Dec. 25th 1896.
> Humanity Esq., The Earth, Cosmos E.

On every encounter, at every turn, with every person, there is cause for happiness. Both the tree and the lamppost, both the friend and the stranger, are equally delightful, for they are splendid and unexplained. They seem supernatural because there is no explanation as to how we should be graced with them, and they seem natural because they are made just for us. The opportunities for happiness are coterminous with being itself. We have been given a world crammed with a million means to beatitude.

Now in light of all this, one would think happiness to be among the easier achievements of mankind. One would think that happiness belongs to our nature, and should come as naturally as eating or loving. Indeed, Chesterton does believe that "all human beings, without any exception whatever, were specially made, were shaped and pointed like shining arrows, for the end of hitting the mark of Beatitude." But, unfortunately, something has gone awry. We don't do nature naturally. The natural acts of eating and loving can become the unnatural acts of gluttony or lust, and a world that should make us happy can make us unhappy because we don't do the world the way it was meant to be done. Chesterton flirted with this state of being, exploring the topography of nihilism—a period described in his autobiography as "How to Be a Lunatic." He had often called himself an optimist, he said, "to avoid the too evident blasphemy of pessimism," but he still searched for a justification of optimism. The stakes were high, because if a ground for optimism could not be found, then life would collapse in on itself, like a star imploding.

We often speak of unhappiness as a sort of pain, but it might be more accurate to speak of unhappiness as a sort of unhealth, because it shares with unhealth this characteristic: one can be in it without realizing it. This is not the case with pain. One cannot be in pain without knowing it. If a well-meaning informant were to approach a person who was lazing comfortably and announce to him in earnest and urgent tones that he was in pain, the latter would be justified in concluding that this evangelist did not understand either the grammar of the word or the logic of the concept. But unlike pain, unhappiness can descend lightly, without friction, like a pendent fog, and one can be unaware of the dis-ease. Then the help one needs is to become aware of the unhappiness, and there are two ways to this.

The first is when unhappiness at length erupts as suffering or sorrow. Regrettably, our generation does not tolerate suffering or sorrow very gladly, and we have generated infinite resources for anesthetizing ourselves. If this is the only way of salvation—a way of negation—then the majority are at risk of never recovering. But there is a second way to become aware of unhappiness—a way of affirmation—whereby one comes in contact with someone who is genuinely happy, someone who is so glad to be that one is reminded of the gladness of being. Such is the rehabilitative effect of the saintly artist, and no matter what genre Chesterton writes in, he has this salubrious effect.

It is tempting to ascribe Chesterton's happiness either to the less complicated age in which he lived or to his optimistic personality, but we cannot

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because he does not. He does not mainly attribute his happiness to nature or nurture (disappointing the psychologist whose anthropology is restricted to these alternatives alone). He attributes happiness to the will. Happiness is not bestowed, it is accomplished. It is gleaned. "In everything worth having, even in every pleasure, there is a point of pain or tedium that must be survived, so that the pleasure may revive and endure. . . . The point is, that if a man is bored in the first five minutes he must go on and force himself to be happy. Coercion is a kind of encouragement."

This viewpoint does not contradict the earlier statement that human nature is fitted like an arrow on the string and aimed straight at happiness, because for an arrow to fly there must be tension in the bow. To say that man was created for happiness, as well as that man must achieve happiness, does not make a contradiction, it makes for drama. The question of whether an individual will achieve beatitude is still open. To be natural means to belong to a nature. It is not natural for a cat to speak; it is natural for a human being to be happy. Although our happiness may be natural, it is neither guaranteed nor easy. There remains some suspense over whether a person will achieve the fullness of his nature.

One's capacity for happiness must be trained, naturally (of course); and it must be trained naturally (in accord with reality). The principle that happiness contains qualifications is a law Chesterton calls "the Doctrine of Conditional Joy," and he explains its *corpus juris* most lucidly in the chapter in *Orthodoxy* called "Ethics of Elfland." "According to elfin ethics all virtue is in an 'if.' The note of the fairy utterance always is, 'You may live in a palace of gold and sapphire, *if* you do not say the word "cow"'; or 'You may live happily with the King's daughter, *if* you do not show her an onion.' The vision always hangs upon a veto. All the dizzy and colossal things conceded depend upon one small thing withheld. All the wild and whirling things that are let loose depend upon one thing that is forbidden."

Joy is conditional, only the price is not arbitrarily set by fates unseen and gods unknown, as some ancient cosmologies and some lately restored cosmologies would have it. It is not as if human beings could enjoy the world in a rampant, reckless way save that we are not allowed to, though we could be. The doctrine of conditional joy does not describe accidental conditions that must be met before joy will be released by some repressive power (as in, it is necessary to eat vegetables before you will be allowed dessert); the doctrine rather describes the conditions necessary for the experience of joy (e.g., it is necessary to eat in order to live). That a disordered will cannot be happy is not an accidental decree, it is a state impossible by definition. Happiness is contingent upon an ordered will, like seeing is contingent upon having one's eyes open. The condition in conditional joy is not a fee demanded of us before we are permitted to enjoy the world, it is the capacitation required of us before we can find the world enjoyable. The price for happiness is set by ontological conditions.

It is commonly said that the modern world is reverting to paganism, and Chesterton would agree, but for quite a different reason than that commonly proffered. When alarmed pietists say the world is reverting to paganism, they mean the modern person is enjoying himself too much. When Chesterton says the modern world has reverted to paganism, he means the modern person is, like the pagan, no longer able to enjoy anything. "The pagan set out, with admirable sense, to enjoy himself. By the end of his civilization he had discovered that a man cannot enjoy himself and continue to enjoy anything else." The secret sin we share with the pagans is egocentric despair. We, like they, are first sated, then satiated, then bored, then unhappy. The twenty-first century may become even more pagan than the twentieth, and if it does, it will not be because its citizenry is shamelessly happy, but for the very opposite reason: they will have reached the same end that paganism reached. "When the pagan looks at the very core of the cosmos he is struck cold. Behind the gods, who are merely despotic, sit the fates, who are deadly. Nay, the fates are worse than deadly; they are dead."

"The test of all happiness is gratitude," Chesterton wrote, and many of us have flunked that test. "Children are grateful when Santa Claus puts in their stockings gifts of toys or sweets. Could I not be grateful to Santa Claus when he put in my stockings the gift of two miraculous legs?" We feel no wonder at ordinary things; it is no wonder that ordinary things disappoint us. Chesterton could be made happy by the sudden yellowness of a dandelion, but we do not find dandelions delightful if we are constantly comparing them to orchids. "It is not familiarity but comparison that breeds contempt. And all such captious comparisons are ultimately based on the strange and staggering heresy that a human being has a *right* to dandelions; that in some extraordinary fashion we can demand the very pick of all the dandelions in the garden of Paradise; that we owe no thanks for them at all and need feel no wonder at them at all." The twin brother of this presumptive attitude is despair, and the two make us sick and tired. "Pessimism is not in being tired of evil but in being tired of good.

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Despair does not lie in being weary of suffering, but in being weary of joy. It is when for some reason or other the good things in a society no longer work that the society begins to decline; when its food does not feed, when its cures do not cure, when its blessings refuse to bless."

Until we are grateful, we will not find the world miraculous; until we find the world miraculous, we will not find it important; until we find the world important, we will not be happy here. The difference between ourselves and Chesterton is that we don't think our world important because it seems ordinary, while he thinks his world is important because he is ordinary. "I am ordinary in the correct sense of the term; which means the acceptance of an order; a Creator and the Creation, the common sense of gratitude for Creation, life and love as gifts permanently good, marriage and chivalry as laws rightly controlling them, and the rest of the normal traditions of our race and religion."

This ordinary happiness makes up the essence of Chesterton, and, woven into all his writings, perspicuous on whatever page one opens, it is his gift to those who suffer boredom. A happy saint is just the antidote we need.

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Barabbas

(a Zealot's prayer)

I've done more for you than most.
As I erase the dark across my heart,
I've lost loyalty to those for whom I fought,
to what my hands almost contained. And while
I struggle in man's fingers, my voice
and strength have helped so little,
if at all. I see the reasons why I failed
and am now afraid to die. I don't want
to fall asleep yet, in bonds I feel
the Roman deepening around me:
give me what I still need to fight, believe
the Messiah will murder this enemy,
to give my life and, more, to wait
for the moment in which I might escape.

Neil Azevedo

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"Father, Forgive Them"

Richard John Neuhaus

The first word from the cross:

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Christians call them the *Triduum Sacrum*, the three most sacred days of the year, the three most sacred days of all time when time is truly told. Maundy Thursday, so called because that night before he was betrayed he gave the command, the *mandatum*, that we should love one another. Not necessarily with the love of our desire but with a demanding love, even a demeaning love—as in washing the feet of faithless friends who will run away and leave you naked to your enemies.

Then the second day, the Friday we so oddly call good. And the third day, the Great Vigil of Resurrection conquest. Do not rush to the conquest. Stay a while with this day. Let your heart be broken by the unspeakably bad of this Friday we call good. Some scholars speculate that "Good Friday" comes from "God's Friday," as "goodbye" was originally "God be by you." But it is just as odd that it should be called God's Friday, when it is the day that we say goodbye to the glory of God. Wherever its name comes from, let your present moment stay with this day; stay a while in the eclipse of the light, stay a while with the conquered One. There is time enough for Easter.

By these three days all the world is called to attention. Everything that is and ever was and ever will be, the macro and the micro, the galaxies beyond number and the microbes beyond notice—everything is mysteriously entangled with what happened, with what happens, in these days. This is the *axis mundi*, the center upon which the cosmos turns. In the derelict who cries from the cross is, or so Christians say, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The life of all on this day died. Stay a while with that dying.

Every human life, conceived from eternity and destined to eternity, here finds its story truly told. In this killing that some call senseless we are brought to our senses. Here we find out who we most truly are because here is the One who is what we are called to be. The derelict cries, "Come, follow me." Follow him *there*? We recoil. We close our ears. We hurry on to Easter. But we will not know what to do with Easter's light if we shun the friendship of the darkness that is wisdom's way to light.

In Good Friday's service of the seven words, alongside this first word from the cross, we read the parable of the prodigal son, the wayward son, the wastrel son. It is all there in the fifteenth chapter of Luke's Gospel. Determined to reach for the stars, to seize the light, to shatter the restraints of life, he went to his father and asked for all he could get. The father, with deep foreboding and breaking heart, gave him what he asked for. So lightly, so eagerly, did impetuous youth leave the love that gave him life. He rushed to the light.

And so the prodigal son went off to what we are told was a distant country. There he wasted his money, he wasted his energies, he wasted his youth. With what he had and with what he was he bought friends and pleasure, until he had no more and was no more what he had been. Destitute, he was reduced to feeding the pigs, and envying the pigs for the slop they ate. And then, in the eclipse of the light,

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we encounter those abruptly wondrous words in the Gospel account: "He came to his senses." Other translations say that "he came to himself." I will return to that later—how we come to know our true selves when we are encountered by an "other" who defines who we are. But, for the moment, we stay with the simple telling of the tale.

He came to his senses. "What am I doing, what have I done, with my life?" From this madness, from the darkness of delusion, we are told that he turned his face homeward, homeward to the waiting father. The father saw him coming from afar. He was way off down the road, not even near the house yet. I suspect the father had been going out every day, month after month, maybe year after year. Waiting for his son—this son so filled with promise, this son so filled with light—to return to the love that gave him life. Day after day, the father had slowly turned back to the house disappointed. This day he had gone out once again, hoping against hope, expecting against expectation, and this day, there in the distance, there just over the horizon, his son.

He saw him from afar off, coming home, coming home to the waiting father. Quickly: the fatted calf, the robe of many colors, the ring of fidelity restored. And the father forgave him everything, even the calculated confession by which he would win his father's favor. Of the son it is said, "He came to his senses," and coming to his senses he came to his father.

Good Friday brings us to our senses. Our senses come to us as we sense that in this life and in this death is our life and our death. The truth about the crucified Lord is the truth about ourselves. "Know yourself," the ancient philosophers admonish us, for in knowing yourself is the beginning of wisdom. To which the Psalmist responds, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The beginning of wisdom is to come to our senses and know the fearful truth about ourselves, that we have wandered and wasted our days in a distant country far from home. We know ourselves most truly in knowing Christ, for in him is our true self. His cross is the way home to the waiting father. "If you would come to your senses," he says, "come, follow me."

The ancient Christian fathers spoke of the Christ event as the "recapitulation" of the entire human drama. In this one life, all lives are summed up; in the eternal present of this one life, the past is encompassed and the future is anticipated, and the life of Everyman and Everywoman is most truly lived. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," he said. Not a way among other ways, not a truth among other truths, not a life among other lives, but the way of all ways, the truth of all truths, and the life of all lives. Recapitulation. It means, quite simply and solemnly, that this is your life, this is my life, and we have not come to our senses until we sense ourselves in the life, and death, of Christ.

"When I came to you, brethren," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, "I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Stay a while. Do not hurry by the cross on your way to Easter joy, for we know the risen Lord only through Christ and him crucified. The philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said that the only simplicity to be trusted is the simplicity to be found on the far side of complexity. The only joy to be trusted is the joy on the far side of a broken heart; the only life to be trusted is the life on the far side of death.

We contemplate for a time the meaning of Good Friday, and then return to what is called the real world of work and shopping and commuter trains and homes. As we come out of a movie theater and shake our heads to clear our minds of another world where we lived for a time in suspended disbelief, as we reorient ourselves to reality, so we leave our contemplation—we leave the church building, we close the book—where for a time another reality seemed possible, believable, even real. But, we tell ourselves, the real world is a world elsewhere. It is the world of deadlines to be met, of appointments to be kept, of taxes to be paid, of children to be educated. From here, from this moment at the cross, it is a distant country. "Father, forgive them, for they have forgotten the way home. They have misplaced the real world."

Not long ago I was invited to lecture to a large group of clergy in the Midwest. They had for two days been studying sacramental and liturgical theology, and it came time for the bishop to introduce me. "It has been a rewarding two days," he said, "as we have been thinking about worship and the sacramental life, but now we have Father Neuhaus to return us to the real world as he addresses the subject of the Church and social responsibility."

Really? The real world? What then is that other world of worship, prayer, and contemplative exploration into the mystery of Christ's presence, a presence ever elusive and disturbingly near? On the part of the bishop it was perhaps a slip of the tongue, but behind slips of the tongue are slips of the mind and sometimes slips of the soul. It happens among all Christians today, of whatever denomination or persuasion, that there is a great slippage of the soul. It is by this world, this world at the cross, that reality is measured and judged. That other world, the world

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we call real, is a distant country until we with Christ bring it home to the waiting father.

We are bringing it home, dragging it all behind us: the deadlines and the duties, the fears of failure and hopes for advancement, the loves unreturned, the plans disappointed, the children we lose, the marriage we cannot mend. And so we come loping along with reality's baggage, returning to the real—the real that we left behind when we left for what we mistook as the real world. "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" I am no longer worthy to be called your son. I am no longer worthy to be called your daughter. And Christ our elder brother takes the baggage and hoists it upon his shoulders, adding this to all that on the cross he is bearing and bringing home. "Father, forgive them, for they knew not what they were doing."

"Come to me," he had earlier said, "all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest." Bring me your baggage.

"Father, forgive them." For whom does he pray forgiveness? For the leaders of his own people, a fragile, frightened establishment that could not abide the threat of the presence of a love so long delayed. For pitiable Pilate, forever wringing his hands forever soiled. For the soldiers who did the deed, who wielded the whip, who drove the nails, who thrust the spear, it all being but a day's work on foreign assignment, far from home. And for us he asks forgiveness, for we were there.

On the Sunday that begins Holy Week we read the passion story and come to the part where the crowd shouts, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" That part is read by the entire congregation, for we were there. The old spiritual asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" Yes, we answer. Yes, we were there when *we* crucified our Lord.

Over the centuries theologians have contrived wondrously refined theories of the atonement; why it is that this One had to die, why it is that his dying is for us death's death, why it is that his open tomb opens for every last child of earth the door to tomorrows without end. And all the theories of atonement are but probings into mystery, the mystery of a love that did not have to be but was, and is. All the theories are intellectual variations, imaginative riffs, on the assertion of St. Paul that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." As the prodigal son was reconciled to his father, but infinitely more so.

"Not counting their trespasses." Accountants reconcile the books, and there is no doubt that the disordered books of our lives need reconciling. But the books are disordered by our disordered lives, and our lostness cannot be remedied by the accountant's craft. Someone must go to the distant country where we have strayed, as a good shepherd seeks a sheep that is lost. Someone must go, but not just anyone. If we are to be brought home, it has to be one who is, in the words of the Nicene Creed, "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God."

Only he can bring us home who comes from home, who comes from God. Coming from the very heart of God, he is God. And so we say that God became man. It is the longest journey, long beyond our ability to imagine. God became man. We say it trembling, we say it puzzling, but more often we say it rotely, counting on routine to buffer what we cannot bear. What can we do with the burden of such a truth? This is the awful truth: that we made necessary the baby crying in the cradle become the derelict crying from the cross. The awful truth—as in awe-filled, filled with awe.

Atonement. It is a fine, solid, twelfth-century Middle English word, the kind of word one is inclined to trust. Think of at-one-ment: what was separated is now at one. But after such a separation there can be no easy reunion. Reconciliation must do justice to what went wrong. It will not do to merely overlook the wrong. We could not bear to live in a world where wrong is taken lightly, where right and wrong finally make no difference. In such a world, we—what we do and what we are—would make no difference. Spare me a gospel of easy love that makes of my life a thing without consequence.

St. Paul again: God was in Christ "not counting their trespasses against them." Atonement is not an accountant's trick, it is not a kindly overlooking, it is not a not counting of what must count if anything in heaven or on earth is to matter. God could not simply decide not to count without declaring that we do not count.

But someone might say that, if God is God, He could do anything. Very well, then, God *would* not decide not to count because He would not declare that we do not count. And yet God's "would" implicates and limits His "could." The God of whom we speak is not, in the words of Pascal, the God of the philosophers but the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God of unbounded freedom who willed to be bound by love. God is what He wills to be and wills to be what He is. St. John tells us, "God is love," and love always binds. In the seminars of philosophical speculation, many gods are possible. In the

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arena of salvation's story, God is the God who is bound to love.

He does not count our trespasses against us because something has been done about them. He reckons us sinners to be righteous because sins have been set to right. Dorothy Day, founder of the Catholic Worker movement among the poor, spoke of a "harsh and dreadful love." It is the love of Christ's cross borne for us, and of the cross he calls us to bear. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor and martyr under the tyranny of the Third Reich, wrote against and lived against the "cheap grace" that cheapens sin and forgiveness alike. Cheap grace is easy grace. Cheap grace does not reckon what went wrong; it requires no costly love.

We confess to hurting someone we love and she says, "Forget it. It's nothing. It doesn't matter." But she knows and we know that it is not nothing and it does matter and we will not forget it. Forgive and forget, they say, but that is surely wrong. What is forgotten need not, indeed cannot, be forgiven. Love does not say to the beloved that it does not matter, for the beloved matters. Spare me the sentimental love that tells me what I do and what I am does not matter.

Forgiveness costs. Forgiveness costs dearly. There are theories of atonement saying that Christ paid the price. His death appeased God's wrath and satisfied God's justice. That way of putting it appeals to biblical witness and venerable tradition, and no doubt contains great truth. Yet for many in the past and at present that way of speaking poses great problems. The subtlety of the theory is overwhelmed by the cartoon picture of an angry Father who demands the death of His Son, maybe even kills His Son, in order to appease His own wrath. In its vulgar form—which means the form most common—it is a matter of settling scores, a drama vengeful and vindictive, more worthy of *The Godfather* than of the Father of whom it is said, "God is love."

And yet forgiveness costs. Forgiveness is not forgetfulness; not counting their trespasses is not a kindly accountant winking at what is wrong; it is not a benign cooking of the books. In the world, in our own lives, something has gone dreadfully wrong, and it must be set right. Recall when you were a little child and somebody—maybe you—did something very bad. Maybe a lie was told, or some money was stolen, or the cookie jar lies shattered on the kitchen floor. The bad thing has been found out, and now something must happen, something must be done about it. The fear of punishment is terrible, but not as terrible as the thought that nothing will happen, that bad things don't matter. If bad things don't matter, then good things don't matter, and then nothing matters, and the meaning of everything lies shattered like the cookie jar on the kitchen floor.

Trust that child's intuition. "Unless you become as little children," Jesus said, "you cannot enter the kingdom of God." Unless we are stripped of our habits of forgetting, of our skillful making of excuses, of our jaded acceptance of a world in which bad things happen and it doesn't matter.

This, then, is our circumstance. Something has gone dreadfully wrong with the world, and with us in the world. Things are out of whack. It is not all our fault, but it is our fault too. We cannot blame our distant parents for that fateful afternoon in the garden, for we were there. We, too, reached for the forbidden fruit—the forbidden fruit by which we know good and evil but, much more fatefully, by which we presume to name good and evil. For most of us, our rebellion did not have about it the gargantuan defiance depicted in Milton's *Paradise Lost.* Most of us did not, as some do, stand on a mountain peak and shake a clenched fist against the storming skies, cursing God.

But then, neither were Adam or Eve so melodramatic. On a perfectly pleasant afternoon in paradise, they did no more than listen to an ever so reasonable voice. "Did God really mean that? Surely He wants you to be yourself, to decide for yourself. Would He have made something so very attractive only to forbid it? The truth is He wants you to be like Him, to be like gods." The fatal step was not in knowing the difference between good and evil. Before what we call "the fall" they knew the good in the fullest way of knowing, which is to say that they did the good, they lived the good. They knew the good honestly, straightforwardly, simply, uncomplicatedly, without shame.

Some thinkers have argued that "the fall" was really a fall up rather than a fall down. By the fall our first parents were raised, it is said, to a higher level of consciousness in the knowing of good and evil. Now they know no longer simply and directly but reflexively; now they know in the consciousness of knowing. This, however, is but another conceit of our fallen nature. It is as though a paraplegic, marvelously skilled in the complex maneuvering of his wheelchair, were to despise the healthy as belonging to a lower order because they walk simply, in blithe ignorance of the complexity of movement that the paraplegic knows so well. The conceit is that our complicated way of knowing is superior because it is ours.

What we call our higher level of consciousness is but an instance of our calling evil good, of our priding ourselves on the consequence of the catastrophe

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that is our fall from the knowledge of the good. True knowledge of the good is a way of knowing that is, in the words of Jesus, loving the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind. The reflexive mind, the divided soul, the conflicted heart—these many take to be the marks of maturity and growth. To know the good simply, to love the good and do the good because it is self-evidently to be loved and to be done, that is taken to be the mark of those whom we condescendingly call simple. So it is that sin's injury is declared a benefit, our weakness a strength, and the fall of that dread afternoon a fall up rather than down. Of those who thus confound good and evil, St. Paul says "they glory in their shame."

If good would come from eating of the Tree of Knowledge, God would not have forbidden it. Nor, contrary to popular myth, is the fatal knowledge the knowledge of sexuality, although God knows how large is the part of sexuality in our glorying in our shame. Yet the fall was not a fall into sexuality. Adam and Eve were created as sexual beings, and the Genesis account leaves no doubt that from the beginning they knew what this meant. "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed."

The shame came later, when they reached, when they overreached, for a different kind of knowledge. The Hebrew verb "to know," *yada*, is rich in meanings. In connection with what we call the fall, to know good and evil is to reach for a universal knowledge, to be unbounded by truth as it is presented to us, to aspire to create our own truth. I say we were there in the garden when humanity aspired to "be like gods" by knowing good and evil, by reaching to know the power to define what is good and what is evil.

This page of Genesis is rewritten every day in the living out of the human story. Each of us has been there when we, god-like, decided that we would decide what is good and what is evil. At least for our own lives. Perhaps we shied away from the god-like pretension of making a universal rule that applies to all. Modestly—or so we said—we limited ourselves to deciding "what is good for me" and "what is wrong for me." "I can speak only for myself," we say. We would not think of "imposing" our judgment upon others. Under the cover of modesty, we deny the truth about the good and the evil that does not require our permission to be true. Thus we would evade the truth of good and evil that brings us to judgment. The truth is that we do not judge the truth; the truth judges us.

"And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." It was the cool of the day, toward evening, when the light was going out. "Where are you, Adam?" And Adam said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." And the Lord God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

And so the questions come at us. Who told us that we are naked? Who so complexified our existence? From where did we get this reflexive knowledge so that we no longer simply know but know only our act of knowing? How did it happen that the simplicity of loving is now displaced by unending complexity over the meanings of love? And why are we ashamed of our nakedness, a nakedness that was once the sign of immediacy to the beloved but is now a sign of innocence lost, of ludicrous vulnerability in the face of our pretension to be our own god, a sign of our sad ending up as our own best beloved? Where are you, my prodigal son Adam? Into what distant country have you gone?

The questions come at each of us. Were you there when they reached for an alien knowledge, turned away from the light, and hid themselves in shame? Of course we were there. Not once but many times we have been there, hiding from the voice of the waiting father who calls in the night, "Where are you?"

Forgiveness costs. Whatever the theory of atonement, this is at the heart of it, that forgiveness costs. Any understanding of what makes at-one-ment possible includes a few simple truths. First, like the child, we know that something very bad has happened. Something has gone very wrong with us and with the world of which we are part. The world is not and we are not what we know was meant to be. That is the most indubitable of truths; it is beyond dispute, it weighs with self-evident force upon every mind and heart that has not lost the sensibility that makes us human.

The something very bad that has happened takes the form of the long, dreary list of history's horribles, from concentration camps to the tortured death of innocent children. And it takes the everyday forms of the habits of compromise, of loves betrayed, of lies excused, of dreams deferred until they die. The indubitable truth is illustrated in ways beyond numbering, from Auschwitz to the shattered cookie jar on the kitchen floor. Something very bad has happened.

Second—and here I simplify outrageously, but our purpose is to cut through to the heart of the mat-

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ter—we are complicit in what has gone so terribly wrong. We have problems with that. World-class criminals, and murderers, and drug traffickers, if they know what they have done, may have no trouble with that, but for many of us it may be a bit hard to swallow. I mean, we haven't done anything *that* bad, have we? Surely nothing so bad as to make *us* responsible for the death of God on the cross. True, the writer of 1 Timothy called himself "the chief of sinners," and a person such as St. Paul did do some nasty things to the Christians in his earlier life as Saul of Tarsus. But then it would seem that he made up for it with an exemplary, indeed saintly, life. Chief of sinners? There would seem to be an element of pious hyperbole there, perhaps even an unseemly boastfulness, a reverse pride, so to speak.

It is difficult to face up to our complicity because the confession of sins does not come easy. It is also difficult because we do not want to compound our complicity by claiming sins that are not ours. We rightly recoil from those who seem to wallow in guilt. The story is told of the rabbi and cantor on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. One after the other, they lament their sins at great length, each concluding that he is a nobody. Then the sexton, inspired by their example, laments his sins and declares that he, too, is a nobody. "Nuh," says the rabbi to the cantor, "Who is he to be a nobody?"

Contemporary sensibilities are offended by what is dismissively termed "guilt tripping." Some while ago I was on the same lecture platform with a famous television evangelist from California who is noted for accenting the positive and upbeat in the Christian message. According to this evangelist, it is as with Coca-Cola: everything goes better with Jesus. He had built a huge new church which he called, let us say, New Life Cathedral, and he explained that during the course of the building there was a debate about whether the cathedral should feature a cross. It might prompt negative thoughts, maybe even thoughts about suffering and death. "Finally, I said that of course there will be a cross," the famous evangelist said. "After all, the cross is the symbol of Christianity and we are a Christian church. But I can guarantee you," he declared with a triumphant smile, "there is nothing downbeat about the cross at New Life Cathedral!"

St. Paul said the cross is "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews," and he seemed to think it would always be that way. Little did he know what gospel salesmanship would one day achieve. In the eighteenth century, Isaac Watts wrote the hymn: "Alas! and did my Savior bleed, / And did my Sovereign die? / Would he devote that sacred head / For such a worm as I?" A worm? Really now. A contemporary hymnal puts it this way: "Would he devote that sacred head / For sinners such as I?" Surely, "sinners" is bad enough. Similarly with the much beloved "Amazing Grace." "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound / That saved a wretch like me." "Wretch" will never do. That is cleaned up in a contemporary version: "That loved a soul like me."

Examples can be multiplied many times over. Groveling is out, self-esteem is in. And if self-esteem seems not quite the right note for Good Friday, at least our complicity can be understood as limited liability. Very limited. Perhaps the changes in Christian thought are not all bad. There have been in Christian devotion excesses of self-accusation, of "scrupulosity," as it used to be called. Wallowing in guilt and penitential grandstanding are justly criticized. And yet . . . We cannot just take the scissors to all those Bible passages that say he died for us and because of us, that they were our sins that he bore upon the cross. Yes, Christianity is about resurrection joy. But do not rush to Easter. Good Friday makes inescapable the question of complicity.

I may think it modesty when I draw back from declaring myself chief of sinners, but it is more likely a failure of imagination. For what sinner should I speak if not for myself? Of all the billions of people who have lived and of all the thousands whom I have known, whom should I say is the chief of sinners? Surely I am authorized, surely I am competent, to speak only for myself? When in the presence of God the subject of sin is raised, how can I help but say that chiefly it is I? Not to confess that I am chiefly the one is not to confess at all. It is the evasion of Adam who said, "It was the woman whom you gave me." It is the evasion of Eve who said, "The serpent beguiled me." It is not to confess at all, and by our making of excuses is our complicity compounded.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do." But now, like the prodigal son, we have come to our senses. Our lives are measured not by the lives of others, not by our own ideals, not by what we think might reasonably be expected of us, although by each of those measures we acknowledge failings enough. Our lives are measured by whom we are created and called to be, and the measuring is done by the One who creates and calls. Finally, the judgment that matters is not ours. The judgment that matters is the judgment of God who alone judges justly. In the cross we see the rendering of the verdict on the gravity of our sin.

We have come to our senses. None of our sins are small or of little account. To belittle our sins is to belittle ourselves, to belittle who it is that God creates and calls us to be. To belittle our sins is to belittle

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their forgiveness, to belittle the love of the father who welcomes us home.

Closely connected are "complicity" and "complexity." Only the dulling of moral imagination prevents us from seeing how we are implicated in the complex web of human evil. The late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was fond of saying, "Some are guilty, all are responsible." We rightly condemn the great moral monsters of history—the Hitlers and Stalins and Maos and lesser mass murderers. Justice requires the gradation of guilt. Distinctions are in order. In important ways, we are not like them and they are not like us. Yet complicity and complexity alert us to the ways in which their crimes find corrupting correlates in our own hearts. "He who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Such words of Jesus encourage not scrupulosity but candor. Contemplating the unspeakable crimes of Stalin's gulag archipelago, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote, "The line between good and evil runs through every human heart."

We would draw the line between ourselves and the really big-time sinners. For them the cross may be necessary. For us a forgiving wink from an understanding Deity will set things right. But the "big time" of sinning is in every human heart. We make small our selves when we make small our sins. Fearing the judgment of great evil, we shrink from the call to great good. Like Adam, we slink away to hide in a corner. Like the prodigal son, we hunker down behind the swine's trough of our shrunken lives. But then he came to his senses. He remembered who he was in his former life, in his real life. There is no way to that dignity restored except through the confession of that dignity betrayed.

Still we hold back from confession, holding on to the tattered remnants of our former dignity. The more Adam hides from his shame the more he proclaims his shame. What ludicrous figures we sinners cut. It is all so unnecessary; it only increases the complicity that we deny. We act as though there is not forgiveness enough. There is more than forgiveness enough.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord? Yes, we were there when we crucified our Lord. Recognizing the line that runs through every human heart, no longer do we try to draw the line between "them" and "us." Who can look long and honestly at the victims and the perpetrators of history's horrors and say that this has nothing to do with me? To take the most obvious instance, where would we have taken our stand that Friday afternoon? With Mary and the Beloved Disciple or with the mocking crowds? Knowing myself and fearing God, knowing a thousand big and little things that I have done and failed to do, I cannot deny that I was there. In ways I do not fully understand, I know that I, too, did the deed, wielded the whip, drove the nails, thrust the spear.

About chief of sinners I don't know, but what I know about sinners I know chiefly about me. We did not mean to do the deed, of course. What we have done wrong—they seemed, or mostly seemed, small things at the time. The word of encouragement withheld, the touch of kindness not given, the visit not made, the trust betrayed, the cutting remark so clever and so cruel, the illicit sexual desire so generously entertained, the angry answer, the surge of resentment at being slighted, the time we thought a lie would do no harm. It is such a long and tedious list of little things. Surely not too much should be made of it, we thought to ourselves. But now it has come to this. It has come to the cross. All the trespasses of all the people of all time have gravitated here, to the killing grounds of Calvary.

Not only about our entanglement in the loss of each but also in the consequence of our deeds, John Donne was right: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main." It was not only for our sins, but surely for our sins, too. What a complex web of complicity is woven by our lives. Send not to know by whom the nails were driven; they were driven by you, by me.

Is there a perverse presumption in confessing that we did the deed? There could be, I suppose. But there is also prudence, and an irrepressible awareness of John Donne's truth about our entanglement with the whole. We pray with the Psalmist, "Who can discern his errors? Cleanse me from my secret faults." Foolishly we hold back from the admission, separating ourselves from the full burden of the common deed. We do not know the measure of our trespass, whereas we know God's mercy is beyond measure. Be grateful that forgiveness is not limited to the sins that we know. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

These, then, are two truths at the heart of atonement. First, that something has gone terribly wrong. We find ourselves in a distant country far from home. Second, whatever the measure of our guilt, we are responsible. Then third, that something must be done about it. Things must be set right. We cannot go on this way. False gospels of positive thinking or stoic exhortations to make the best of it are worse than useless. They are obscene. They are invitations to make our peace with a corruption at the core of everything. Better that Job

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and all the Jobs on the long mourning bench of history should curse God and die than that they should make their peace with the evil that they know. Such a peace is the peace of the dead, of those who are already spiritually and morally dead. The religious marketplace is crowded with the peddlers of peace of mind and peace of soul. But the narcotic of denial or pretense is too high a price to pay. Better to rage against the night.

Something must be done about what has gone wrong. Things must be set right. And this brings us to the fourth great truth of atonement: whatever it is that needs to be done, we cannot do it. Each of us individually, the entirety of the human race collectively—what can we do to make up for one innocent child tortured and killed? Never mind making up for Auschwitz, or the killing fields of Cambodia, or the coffin ships of traffickers in human slavery, or the slaughter beyond numbering of innocents in the womb. We chatter on about modernity and progress while King Herod reigns secure. "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, for they were no more."

Rightly does Rachel refuse to be comforted. Something must be done. It started long before Rachel and her children. From far back in the mists of our beginnings, the blood of Abel has been crying from the ground; and along the way we have allowed ourselves to be comforted by the counsel of Cain, advising us to get over it, to get on with our lives, for, after all, are we our brother's keeper? But we know we are. We don't know what to do about it, but we know that if we lose our hold on that impossible truth, we have lost everything. Something must be done. Justice must be done. Things must be set right.

But what can *we* do? We cannot even put our own lives in order, never mind setting right a radically disordered world. The Apostle Paul declares, "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" There is an answer to that question, but do not rush to the answer. Stay with the question for a time if you would understand why the derelict hangs there on the cross.

If things are to be set right, if justice is to be done, somebody else will have to do it. It cannot be done by just anybody, as though one more death could somehow "make up for" innocent deaths beyond numbering. That way lies the seeking out of scapegoats, the vain effort to heap our collective guilt on another, on the "other." People have been doing that from the foundation of the world. History is filled with scapegoats sacrificed to appease outraged justice.

And the Lord commanded Moses that Aaron should bring the goat before the Lord, "and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, and all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land." The goat goes off to a distant country. God Himself trained ancient Israel in the ritual by which justice was satisfied, but only for a time. It is a training for what was to come, and for what was to surpass it.

Through the myths of millennia, blind and stumbling humanity acts upon the unquenchable intuition that something must be done. From Canaanite altars to Aztec temples, countless thousands have been offered in blood sacrifice. In the cruel twists of mythic imagination, the scapegoat is not expelled but destroyed. In our own enlightened century a nation sought to purify itself and the world by the extermination of the Jews. Even today we witness mobs outside prison walls cheering the execution taking place inside. It is a long, terrible history of bloodlust and vengeance, all in the name of justice, all driven by the insistence—the *correct* insistence—that something must be done.

As much as we are repulsed by it, that long, terrible history bears witness to an intuition that cannot be, and should not be, repressed. Something *must* be done. Otherwise, we live in a world without moral meaning. Otherwise, forgiveness is Bonhoeffer's "cheap grace" that trivializes evil and thereby also trivializes good. Otherwise, the elder brother, the one who resented his brother's welcome home, was right in protesting that the reconciliation with the father is cheap and easy and dishonest. Forgiveness costs, it *must* cost, or else the trespass does not matter. Is such an intuition primitive? Yes, primitive as in primordial, as in that which constitutes our moral being in the world.

If we cannot set things right, if we cannot even set ourselves, never mind the world, right—who, then, is to do it? It must be someone who is in no way responsible for what has gone wrong. It must be done by an act that is perfectly gratuitous, that is not driven by necessity, by an act that is perfectly free. The act must be by one who embodies *everything*, whose life is not one life among many but is life itself—a life that is our life and the life of all who have

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ever lived and ever will live. But where is such a one to be found?

The opening words of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." The one who is life itself does this because nobody else could do it. He who is light and life plunges headlong into darkness and death, and does so in perfect freedom. It is his mission, the reason he came into the world. "No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord," he said. "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father."

The Father and the Son have colluded in a thing most astonishing, a thing on the far side of our ability to be astonished. Justice cries out to be satisfied; something must be done. From the blood of Abel, to the prison camps of Siberia, to the nine-year-old who this afternoon died of leukemia, justice cries out. These things must not be permitted to have the last word.

Who is at fault? Who is guilty? From the beginning of time, the wise and the good have wrestled with these questions. The wicked all have excuses. The guards at the death camps, the husband cheating on his wife, the executive padding his accounts, the physician giving a lethal dose of morphine in the nursing home—all have excuses. I was obeying superior orders; I have uncontrollable needs that must be satisfied; everybody does it; we must relieve the world of useless lives. Name the crime and it is fitted out with an excuse. My parents abused me; I was deprived; I was spoiled; my genes made me do it. And we are back to "Adam, where are you?" and his pathetic response, "The woman that you gave me . . ."

All the Adams and all the Eves join with the brightest and the best of philosophers to declare that this is just the way the world is. And who is responsible for that? And with that question was born what philosophers call the question of "theodicy"—how to justify to man the ways of God. And thus was God put on trial. If God is good and God is almighty, how did evil come about? If there is evil, how can an almighty God be good or a good God be almighty? In order to adjudicate these questions, we constituted ourselves the jury and the judge, and we put God in the dock. And soon enough we would constitute ourselves the executioner as well.

From every corner of the earth, from every scene of every crime, from North and South, from East and West, from the rich and from the poor, every mother's son and every father's daughter gathered. The jury deliberated, and the jury reached its verdict. The decision was unanimous. With one voice, poor deluded humanity pointed to the prisoner in the dock and declared, "God is guilty!"

The angels were stunned, the stars hid their light, the universe went silent at the audacity of it, the wrongness of it, the outrageousness of it. The Judge of the guilty is Himself judged guilty. Here now at last, in all the thick catalogue of human rebellion, is the lie so brazen as to surely bring down upon the heads of the insurrectionists a punishment swift and terrible. But no, the prisoner standing in the dock calmly responds, "For this was I born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears my voice."

In perfect freedom, the Son become the goat become the Lamb of God is condemned by the lie in order to bear witness to the truth. The truth is that we are impotent to set things right. The truth is that the more we try to set things right, the more we compound our guilt. It is not enough that God take our part. God must take our place. All the blood of goats and lambs, all the innocent victims from the foundation of the world, all the acts of expiation and reparation, they only make things worse. They all strengthen the grip of the great lie that we can set things right. The grip of that lie is broken by the greatest of lies, "God is guilty!"

God must die. It is a lie so monstrous that to suggest it invites instant annihilation: except that God accepts the verdict. Those who know the awful truth hear His voice. And Jesus said, "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name."

But how, we must ask, is God glorified by the humiliation and death of God? This great reversal of everything we think we know is too much to bear. Dark is light and light is dark, and right is wrong and wrong is right, and a lie is recruited to the service of the truth. The order of things is shattered. Precisely so, our disordered order is shattered so that things might be restored to order. And then Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." The ruler of this world—the lord of disorder and of disordered humanity in his thrall—passes judgment on the Judge of all. The judgment is so monstrously false

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that only by submitting to it can its falseness be exposed. By Christ's submitting to the judgment of the world the world is judged.

Jesus might have been merely a moral teacher, pointing out the grotesque error of the judgment. Christianity would then have become a school of thought promoting his moral philosophy. Jesus came, however, to be the Lamb of God, living out and dying out this falsehood that would not die unless taken to its final conclusion. Only in this way would he be lifted up and draw all men to himself, not simply as our teacher but as our Savior and our Lord. Only by submitting to our folly could he save us from our folly. The drama had to be played out all the way. St. John writes of the night before he died. "Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that the hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."

He loved them to the end that they, too, might learn the way that is on the far side of outraged justice. That same night he told them, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you." And then he prayed for his friends, "Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which Thou hast given me in Thy love for me before the foundation of the world."

From before the foundation of the world. In the beginning was the Word. Did God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—know from the beginning that it would turn out this way? From before the foundation of the world, from before the time when there was time, did God hear humanity's fatal verdict: "God is guilty! Crucify him! Crucify him!"? And did the Son say to the Father, from the beginning, that he would go in the power of the Spirit to submit himself to the sentence of death? St. Paul suggests as much: "But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glorification. None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Here we touch on mystery far beyond our ability to understand; we try to listen in on the conversation that is the very life of the Triune God, the life of God that is the power and love that enables all to be. Our desire to understand is as inescapable as our failure to understand. The more we search and the deeper we go, the more we cry out with Paul: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways!" Yet surely the love with which Jesus loved the Father here on earth is one with the love of the Word that was in the beginning. The perfect self-surrender of the cross is, from eternity and to eternity, at the heart of what it means to say that God is love.

1 John puts it this way: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love." Yes, from the foundation of the world God heard the rebel verdict, "God is guilty!" And from the beginning He knew what He would do about a humanity He created free to love Him, and therefore free to hate Him. God subjects Himself to the blasphemous lie that He is the guilty one. The rebellion did not take God by surprise. Redemption was not an improvisation, an emergency measure in response to an unexpected setback. From the beginning, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." This is what it means to love; this is what it means to *be* love; this is what it means to say that God *is* love.

Yet it hardly seems possible that injustice could be set right by a still greater injustice, that wrong could be set right by a still greater wrong. That is what St. Paul appears to suggest, however, in the passage where he speaks of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." The language is radical: not simply that he bore the consequences of sin but that he was made to *be* sin. The great reversal reverses all of our preconceptions. God must become what we are in order that we might become what God is. To effectively take our part, He must take our place.

The word "theodicy" means the judgment of God—not God judging us but our judging God. The philosophical problem of theodicy is that of trying to square God's ways with our sense of justice. This assumes that we know what justice is, but the entire story the Bible tells begins with the error of that presumption. It is the original error of our wanting to name good and evil. Right from the start Adam tried to put God in the dock, making God responsible for the fall because, after all, God gave him the woman who tempted him to sin. From the beginning we see the argument building up to humanity's cry, "God is guilty!"—building up to the derelict nailed to the cross.

In the long history of human philosophies, the name of the game has been theodicy. Trying to square the ways of God with our understanding of justice, some have concluded that He is not good,

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others that He is not almighty, and yet others that He is not at all. But the right question is not that of theodicy but of what we might call "homodicy"—the judgment of man. The crisis is not in justifying God's ways to us but in justifying our ways to God. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." It is the world that needed to be reconciled to God's justice, not God to the world's justice. It does not say "God was in Christ reconciling Himself to the world." After all, He is God and we are not; He is the Creator and we the creatures. It seems only right.

And yet. God reconciling the world to Himself is also God reconciling Himself to the world. In working out the plan of redemption, the Bible does not say that man became God but that God became man. Further, He reconciled Himself to the world by "not counting their trespasses against them." He forgave us not by ignoring our trespasses but by assuming our trespasses. "For our sake He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." God became what by right He was not so that we might become what by right we are not. This is what Christians through the ages have called "the happy exchange." This exchange, this reversal, is at the very epicenter of the story of our redemption. In the Great Vigil of Easter we sing of the *felix culpa*—the happy fault: "O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam that gained for us so great a Redeemer!"

In Matthew's Gospel this exchange is signaled at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. John the Baptizer announces that Jesus is the one who "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Jesus, he declares, has come to judge the world. Then we read: "Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' But Jesus answered him, 'Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented." God asks our consent when He takes our part by taking our place.

Later, on the night before he was betrayed, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet. He came to Peter and Peter said, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand." Peter declared, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me." He will not serve us against our will.

To those who are accustomed to living in a world turned upside down, setting it right cannot help but appear to be turning it upside down. With our first parents we reached for the power to name good and evil, thinking to assert control, and thereby we lost control. With the prodigal son, we grabbed what we could and ended up impoverished and alone in a distant country. Because God is not the God of the philosophers, because God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because God is love, He sent His Son to the far country to share our lot, to bear the consequences of our folly, to lead us home to the waiting father.

Such a way of love violates our sense of justice. With John the Baptizer we protest. But Jesus says, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Note that he says "thus it is fitting for *us* to fulfill all righteousness." He fulfills all righteousness, he does what must be done to set things right, by assuming the burden of our every human wrong. And we, too, have a part in fulfilling all righteousness by letting him do for us what we could not do for ourselves. On the one hand, we would not dare ask him to go to the cross. On the other, we joined in humanity's determination to acquit ourselves by condemning him to the cross. It is the necessary outcome of the verdict, "God is guilty."

Those who issue a verdict so grotesque deserve to die. Justice would seem to demand it. But God made the long journey into our distant country not to destroy but to give life. John's Gospel puts it this way: "For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." Even if salvation requires that God is the one who is condemned. God cannot agree to a verdict so manifestly unjust, but He does submit to the sentence that the verdict entails.

If we have even the slightest sense of justice, we recoil at the thought. But what else is to be done about all that has gone wrong? Is there any alternative to its being set right by a yet greater wrong? Or can that greater wrong really be wrong if it is the judgment of God that it should be? If we say this way of atonement is wrong, we are back in the garden presuming to name right and wrong, good and evil. Love is the justice of the God who is love. To John the Baptizer and to us Jesus says, "Let it be so now." God asks for our consent. Before such a mystery of unbounded love that is bound even to die for the beloved, we offer not only our consent but gratitude exultant. *O felix culpa*! "O happy fault! O necessary sin of Adam that gained for us so great a Redeemer!"

Atonement. At-one-ment. What was separated by an abyss of wrong has been reconciled by the deed of perfect love. What the first Adam destroyed the second Adam has restored. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We knew not

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what we did when we reached for the right to name good and evil. We knew not what we did when we grabbed what we could and went off to a distant country. We knew not what we did when, in the madness of excusing ourselves, we declared God guilty. But today we have come to our senses. Today, here at the cross, our eyes are fixed on the dying derelict who is the Lord of life. We look at the one who is everything that we are and everything that we are not, the one who is true man and true God. In him we, God and man, are perfectly one. At-one-ment. Here, through the cross, we have come home. Home to the truth about ourselves. Home to the truth about what God has done about what we have done. And now we know, or begin to know, why this awful, awe-filled Friday is called good. FT

Pontius Pilate

The crowd assembled. I listened to its power
measuring his weakness. As I watched
from the pavement we were each alone.
To attend its attention is always best.
I distorted the distance that divided it
from his life, from one most like ourselves.
I had no power to persuade, my words
rendered useless as his faltering silence.
I tried, slowed the process by dressing him
to calm its taste, a defeat become a voice
swallowed by its voice. If only not to be
so similar to something weakened, shown
before the image of my hid belief.
When it's too hungry it must be left alone.

Neil Azevedo

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A Century in Books

An Anniversary Symposium

Whatever else we know about the readers of this journal—and, thanks to the recent readership survey, we know quite a bit—we know that you are voracious readers of books. Important ideas, as in thought about "first things," flow into, through, from, and around books. What better way, therefore, to mark our first ten years than to ask some of our most distinguished writers to reflect on books of the century past that have made a lasting mark? As you will see, the influence of the books discussed is not in every case benign. But they are all important to understanding the ideas for which and against which we would contend.

—The Editors

Leo Strauss
Natural Right and History
(1953)

Hadley Arkes

Harry Jaffa has remarked about his late teacher Leo Strauss that he had made it his vocation to stand against the tendency of modernity to reject both reason and revelation. Modern social science and philosophy would insist that we can have no ground of reason to speak of the truth or falsity of moral judgments. And a materialistic science would rule out the claims of a Creator as unknowable by empirical methods, and therefore beyond the domain of things that can be known. Against these tendencies in modernity, Strauss would seek to restore the tradition of classic philosophy running back to Plato and Aristotle; and at the same time he would take seriously again the tradition of understanding running back to the Hebrew Bible. He would stand, then, for the restoration of Jerusalem and Athens.

In Strauss' reading, Socrates had brought forth political philosophy when he brought philosophy down from the clouds and brought it to bear on the questions of justice that arise in the city. For me, Jaffa finally brought Strauss down from the clouds when he composed his poetic, magisterial book on Abraham Lincoln, which brought the whole tradition of political philosophy to bear on the gravest crisis of the American regime, the *Crisis of the House Divided.* Between a master and his most devoted student a wondrous alchemy may come into play; in this case the student came to shape the work of his professor. Strauss' *Natural Right and History* shows Jaffa's influence when it begins by invoking the Declaration of Independence, in its willingness to speak at once of certain moral truths, grounded in nature, and the Author of that nature, the Creator of a moral law universal in its reach. That move by Strauss reflected Jaffa's deep persuasiveness on the significance of Lincoln and the central issue that marked his mission in our politics. As Lincoln argued, the American

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republic did not begin with the Constitution; it began with that "proposition," as he called it, the first principle that "all men are created equal."

Lincoln recognized that anyone who would try to alter the regime, or the work of the Founders, would have to strike at that central truth, expressed in the Declaration of Independence. In order to justify the enslavement of black people, a large portion of the political class was willing to talk itself out of the proposition that established, for whites as well as blacks, the right to be ruled only with their consent. A nation that talked itself into the rightness of ruling black people without their consent would make itself suggestible to the notion of withdrawing the franchise from certain poor whites as well, until the regime itself was converted into something else. The forms of a republic might remain, while the inner substance would be evacuated.

Just a few years ago, the contributors to that controversial symposium in FIRST THINGS ("The End of Democracy?", November 1996) were branded as incendiaries for making that point. But they could not be dismissed as implausible unless Lincoln could be dismissed for making precisely the same point. It was Lincoln's genius to recognize the centrality of that principle articulated in the Declaration. His adversary, Stephen Douglas, might have provided a pragmatic way of barring the extension of slavery by keeping black people out of the western territories. And yet, the critical point for Lincoln was whether the souls of the American people would still be formed around the understanding of slavery as a wrong in principle, a wrong that could not be absorbed without imperiling, at the root, the right of people to be ruled with their own consent.

The genius of Harry Jaffa was to bring out this substance of Lincoln's thought, precisely at the time when historians no longer considered Lincoln's understanding of the Declaration and natural rights to be central, or even relevant, to any account of his life and work. Modern historians are more likely to say with the late Carl Becker that "to ask whether the natural rights philosophy of the Declaration of Independence is true or false is essentially a meaningless question."

Jaffa's work also makes clear that an adequate account of Lincoln could be given only by one accomplished in the study of political philosophy. Only someone versed in the texts would recognize that Lincoln, quite on his own, made his way back along the paths of reflection that Aristotle and Aquinas had marked off before him. At the same time, only one attentive to the claims of Jerusalem as well as Athens would notice Lincoln's deepening of the teaching of the Declaration: the language of self-evident truths, accessible to our reason, reflected the confidence of the Enlightenment in the power of that reason. But as Jaffa pointed out, Lincoln annexed to those claims of reason the piety of the biblical tradition. At Gettysburg, he would speak of the Union as the patrimony given to us by "our fathers." The principles of the Declaration would become, for Lincoln, our "ancestral faith," and in his remarkable Second Inaugural Address he would suggest that the Civil War was the blood price being exacted from the country for the sin of slavery, the sin of falling away from that ancestral faith.

Lincoln claimed that Stephen Douglas was doing nothing less than "debauching" the public mind, that his policy reduced to this: "That if any one man choose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object." And now, as Russell Hittinger has pointed out, our current laws on abortion, fashioned by the Supreme Court, can be condensed in this way: that one person may choose to kill a second, for reasons wholly of self-interest, and a third person may not object. For that killing is now a matter of "privacy." Once again, a group of human beings may be removed from the class of "rights-bearing beings," outside the protections of the law.

Some of us, tutored by Jaffa, have been persuaded that the issue of abortion retains its centrality, or its architectonic quality, in our politics precisely because it runs to the same root as the issue that formed the crisis for Lincoln. That is not a question that has engaged the passion of Professor Jaffa, but I take it as a telling sign that one of his most devoted students, Michael Uhlmann—whose commentary appears in these pages—has been one of the most gifted writers on the pro-life side, even before *Roe v. Wade* made of abortion a putative constitutional right.

Since the time that Leo Strauss posted his warnings, the hold of "relativism" in all its forms has only deepened in the universities and the culture. Jaffa had the wit to recognize that the best path of political resistance was to rally the public once again to the principles of the Declaration, and that the most compelling exposition of those principles would be found in Lincoln. There is fresh evidence every day that students are still stunned, astonished—and then summoned—by the poetic force of Lincoln, and by his burning moral clarity. Jaffa has rescued Lincoln from the moral witlessness of the historians, and in that work of high art he has prepared the ground for rescuing us all.

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Reinhold Niebuhr
Moral Man and Immoral Society
(1932)

Matthew Berke

From the 1930s through the 1950s, Reinhold Niebuhr achieved a singular stature among twentieth-century American theologians. The son of a German immigrant pastor, Niebuhr (1892-1971) was not a popular evangelist but rather a philosopher of public life, bringing the insights of biblical truth to bear on the great issues of politics and social ethics. He spoke to and within the Church, but also to a broader educated public. Yet at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Niebuhr seems, at least to his disciples, a classic instance of the prophet who is without honor in his own country. This is not altogether surprising, for despite his stress on the possibilities for improving the temporal world, and, beyond that, his ultimate affirmation of hope and redemption, Niebuhr expressed a profoundly tragic sense of history that runs against the grain of American optimism.

An outspoken progressive and reformer from the start, Niebuhr was nonetheless always unhappy with the sentimentality and pacifism that pervaded the social program of liberal Christianity—especially mainline Protestantism—which (to oversimplify somewhat) sought to correct political injustices mainly through appeals to reason and conscience. In *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, Niebuhr broke decisively with this "social gospel" outlook, insisting that *power* is the principal ingredient in arbitrating the competing claims of nations, races, and social classes. According to Niebuhr, conflict and tension are permanent features of history. While social improvement is possible, the justice of this world is born in strife and is always provisional, fragmentary, and insecure.

Niebuhr's pessimistic account was based not merely on observation of the world as it is, but also on a theology which emphasized that sin is endemic to the human condition in history. Man, as a creature whose existence paradoxically combines spirit and matter, can sense his own "finitude and fragility" in the universe; annihilation and meaninglessness threaten all of his hopes, achievements, and affections. Thus man is tempted to prideful assertions of his will that provide an illusion of control and meaning. While he can ease his anxiety and pretension through faith in God rather than self, that faith is always imperfect (imperfect faith being, for Niebuhr, the essence of "original sin"). Reason can sharpen ethical sensitivity and practice, but, ironically, it can also sharpen the capacity to rationalize selfishness and the will to power—and, doubly ironic, sometimes both at the same time.

The tendency to rationalize, Niebuhr argued, is especially pronounced in man's "collective life." While individuals in their personal dealings often transcend self-interest (hence "moral man"), nations dealing with other nations, or social classes with other social classes, have little or no capacity for self-transcendence ("immoral society"). Nations and classes have limited understanding of the people they harm by their unjust self-assertion; they lack appreciation for the often complicated laws and institutions through which such injustice is perpetuated; and they are more inclined to embrace rationalizations of self-interest than prophetic denunciations. These facts, for Niebuhr, explain why dominant groups rarely yield their privileges except when put under pressure by some countervailing social force.

Niebuhr's "Christian realism" was not, however, a Darwinian or Machiavellian ethic of pure struggle and the will to power. Niebuhr stressed the relevance of *agape*, or Christian love, not as a directly practicable political principle, but as the ideal toward which justice strives and the standard of judgment on all political achievements in history. Moral, rational, and religious appeals might be subordinate factors in the struggle for justice, but Niebuhr still counted them as real: if rational and ethical considerations alone don't make oppressors yield just concessions to the oppressed, they often do enable them to internalize rather than contest reforms once they are established.

Political power is necessary in politics, Niebuhr insisted, but it should be exercised by men and women who possess prudence, self-knowledge, forgiveness, and charity. Equipped with these faculties and theological virtues, they will be better able to fight for justice in a way that makes reconciliation possible. (Lincoln and Churchill were Niebuhr's models in this respect.) There is already in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* a hint of the appreciation Niebuhr later developed for the American constitutional system, with its checks and balances and its genius for recognizing—and thereby channeling and containing—society's inevitable conflicts.

For all that, the realism of *Moral Man* retains a tragic sense: the fear that struggles for justice can end up being destructive for all parties, that oppressed and oppressor can merely reverse roles,

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that even a relatively just peace can often sacrifice important values. Moreover, Niebuhr's realism made it painfully clear that people of genuine good will, whether religious or not, sometimes have to employ distinctly unloving means in the service of love and justice. Most of all, Niebuhr in this book begins to recognize that our fondest hopes and ideals for society must inevitably be frustrated. To seek their enactment in history (or as others would say, to "immanentize the eschaton") is to fall into utopianism and, ultimately, fanaticism.

What finally prevents Niebuhrian realism from becoming a dark or even cynical vision is the promise of God's kingdom—and His forgiveness. In history, men and women can only do what is possible within the specific and concrete circumstances of their time. For people to live with this terrible limitation on their moral impulses, Niebuhr thinks, they must believe that at the end of history God will complete, and thus give meaning to, their partial and ambiguous achievements. Perhaps even more important, they must rely on God's forgiveness to bear the evil and guilt that political action inevitably entails. As in Aeschylus' tragic drama, the lesser evil may still be so bad that the guilt it brings can be lifted only through divine intervention.

In a sentimental and superficially optimistic culture, such gravitas often seems alien. It is perhaps ironic that Niebuhr's most famous words, taken from a sermon given shortly after *Moral Man* was written, were intended as a guide for politics and history more than personal spiritual renewal—yet they have become a kind of national motto for individuals at their extremes: "God, grant us grace to accept with serenity that which cannot be changed, courage to change that which can be changed, and wisdom to know the difference."

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The Humanist Manifestos
(1933, 1973, 1999)

J. Budziszewski

My nomination for the twentieth-century "Must Read" list is not a good book, but a revealingly bad one. When I first began teaching political theory and my students asked about a mysterious document called the "Humanist Manifesto," I thought I had stumbled across the Southern evangelical version of the Roswell flying saucer myth. That shows the folly of studying philosophy apart from how it plays out in popular culture. My students had heard of the Manifesto because their pastors had read Francis Schaeffer, the Christian apologist who made evangelicals aware of the culture war. Card-carrying secular humanists do exist, I discovered, and there had been not one Humanist Manifesto but two—the first in 1933, the second on its fortieth anniversary in 1973. Finally reading them, I found an epitome of all the fallacies that as a child of mid-century I had ever been taught.

Even more amazing were the lists of signatories, which seemed to include everyone who was anyone: for example, John Dewey, Isaac Asimov, John Ciardi, Alan F. Guttmacher, Andrei Sakharov, Betty Friedan, and B. F. Skinner—the preeminent American philosopher of the first half of the century, a novelist and science popularizer, a poet and Dante translator, the president of Planned Parenthood, the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, the inventor of an idiom for American feminism, and the psychologist who turned behaviorism into a system.

These flaccid committee products make a dull read, but a fascinating comparison: they show how an antireligious worldview became an unofficially established religion but had to stop calling itself a religion to finish the job.

Both Manifestos call for a form of democracy with certain rights, some kind of socialism, and the renunciation of force as a step toward world government. They propose that children and adults be educated in their ideologies, and through the thirties expression "social and mental hygiene" and the seventies expression "altering the course of human evolution and cultural development" they hint at much more. "Social hygiene" and "altering the course of human evolution," of course, mean eugenics; "mental hygiene" and "altering the course of human cultural development," indoctrination.

The Manifestos are also naturalistic: they think nature is all there is. Scorning "salvationism" as a distraction from the pressing problems of the present life, they disavow belief in God and call upon human beings to "save" themselves. While holding that traditional Western morality is defective, they are cagey about which commandments they would jettison—except the ones about sex, naturally. The rest of the answer is found in Manifesto II, where we read that ethics is "situational." This means, of

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course, that the rest of the commandments must also go.

Manifesto I blazons that humanism is a religion. Not only that, it demands the transformation of all older religions into its vessels. In the future, it boasts, "there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural"—the "emotions" presumably including wonder, awe, and the sense of the holy, and the "attitudes" including praise, adoration, and humility. By the time of Manifesto II, however, there has been a change. Though it still makes claims about the ultimate meaning of things, it no longer calls its creed a religion. By this time the Supreme Court had begun to ask whether secular humanism is a religion within the meaning of the First Amendment, and *Torcasco v. Watkins* (1961) even seemed to have provided the answer: "Yes." Just how this would play out in subsequent cases was uncertain, but for any movement that seeks control of law and education, unequivocal recognition as a religion would spell disaster. The government could no more teach or promote it than Methodism or Roman Catholicism.

The Manifestos both hold up the scientific method as the model for all belief. This is remarkable, because although Manifesto I claims scientific grounding for humanism itself, Manifesto II claims merely that it cannot be falsified—which by its own standards would seem to make it meaningless. The third Manifesto, released just in time for the millennium, is even more defensive, although its triumphalist rhetoric blurs the picture.

Denying that secular humanism is a religion, Manifesto III pins the blame for this calumny on fundamentalists and right-wingers, never mentioning that the first Manifesto said it *was* a religion. Whining that secular humanists have been "unfairly accused of being unable to provide viable foundations for ethical responsibilities," it does not even try to explain how there can be any ethics in a universe in which natural forces and objects are all there is. Decrying irrationalism, it fails to recognize that it thereby condemns its own child.

Vanity, vanity. Some movements exhaust themselves only after generations of misspent power. At the moment when its march through the institutions seems complete, this one is already dead. The next century will tell us how far a corpse can walk.

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Ethics
(1949)

Jean Bethke Elshtain

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life and death are powerful witness to what it means to "put first things first." Although it was never his overriding theological concern to work out the connections between the City of Man and the Kingdom of God, he never confused the two, as became clear when the issue was forced upon him during the dark night of National Socialism in Germany and Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union. The menace Bonhoeffer confronted directly was, of course, Nazism. As the vast majority of his countrymen and, shamefully, his coreligionists either made their peace with Nazism or actively promoted its advance, Bonhoeffer first demurred, then resisted, and finally moved into the active opposition that cost him his life.

Were Bonhoeffer among us today, he would insist that his opposition was much easier to understand than was the German obedience and enthrallment with Nazism or the active courting of the Nazi regime by the so-called "German Christians." Many have seen the behavior of the state-worshiping "German Christians" as the ultimate outcome of Luther's doctrine of the "two kingdoms." Luther saw the need for rules and rulers as God's punishment for human wickedness, and insisted as a consequence that believers ought to obey the rules unless ordered to explicitly deny the faith. Some alleged that this view gave nearly unchecked earthly or "profane" power to rulers. Their domain grew as the Church's domain shrank. Unsurprising, then, that when the crunch came it was all too easy to capitulate and to see in Hitlerism an avatar of a specifically German brand of Christian particularism.

Bonhoeffer resisted this reading of Luther with all his strength in his unfinished *Ethics*. He argued that in condemning the state idolatry represented by Nazism, he was acting out of *faithfulness* to his tradition rather than in opposition to it. He rejected the sort of vulgarization of Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms that holds that there are two spheres, "the one divine, holy, supernatural, and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural, and un-Christian." This reading of Luther's doctrine, shaped (or deformed) by the Enlightenment's apotheosis of reason in opposition to faith, finalized the severing of that which was "Christian" from that

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which was "profane." The upshot over time was that human beings came to see the worldly domain as one in which they reigned as masters. The roots of totalitarianism lay in uninhibited human striving and willing, in which man begins to adore himself, denies the Cross, denies the Mediator and Reconciler, and has fallen out with the created world.

Bonhoeffer insists that deifying man's sovereignty promotes Western godlessness. Faithfulness to Luther, rightly understood, requires that we accept our status as creatures whose actions are always partial and limited. We must distinguish the legitimate order of government from perversions which lead that order to overstep its appropriate boundaries. Legitimate government involves responsibility for limited tasks; within its limits and under normal circumstances, we do owe it obedience. But we do not owe government our very selves. The individual's "duty of obedience is binding . . . until government directly compels him to offend against divine commandment, that is to say, until government openly denies its divine commission and thereby forfeits its claims. . . . If government violates or exceeds its commission at any point . . . then at this point, indeed, obedience is to be refused, for conscience's sake, for the Lord's sake."

Government, then, is neither to be "diabolized" nor idolized. Religious belief always relativizes the claims of public life even as it calls us into stewardship and communal life. To sustain and support this balance, a strong and robust theology is necessary. Such a theology is conservative in the sense of claiming and clinging to what Bonhoeffer, in his prison letters, called the "full content" of the New Testament, for "the New Testament is not a mythological clothing of a universal truth; this mythology (resurrection, etc.) is the thing itself."

Because Bonhoeffer never penned a full-fledged justification of his refusal to obey the Nazi state and his determination to resist even unto death, he has been turned by too many into a kind of all-purpose resister or radical. This he was not. He was a courageous man and serious theologian who saw such resistance as a tragic exception—a dire necessity—but only when it was clear that *this* state at *this* time had, indeed, become diabolical. But each state at any time must be viewed with a skepticism burnished by faith, a skepticism that helps to sustain a certain distance from any center of human power but especially that power lodged in an entity that is, as Max Weber had it, the legitimate repository of the means of violence. The state always bears watching.

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Irma Rombauer
The Joy of Cooking
(1931)

Molly Finn

I asked my daughter, an accomplished cook and master baker, if she ever uses *The Joy of Cooking*. She looked at me as if I were crazy. "Of course! I use it all the time." "What for?" Pause. "If I need to look up a roasting time, if I want to find a certain cupcake. . . ." "Why do you like it?" No pause. "It works. It's easy to use and there's a nice helpful attitude. It's American. It's old-fashioned." That just about says it all. Everyone I've asked, in my generation and in hers, has given essentially the same answer.

The Joy of Cooking is an American institution. It was the only cookbook chosen by the New York Public Library during its centennial celebration in 1995 as one of the 150 most influential books of the century. Since it was first published in 1931 it has provided encouragement, information, and remedies for kitchen emergencies to countless uncertain brides, college students, experienced cooks, innocents, and snobs. With its excellent index and well-tested recipes, it has been the reference book of choice for those interested in traditional American food.

The best thing about *The Joy of Cooking*, however, is the voice of its author, Irma Rombauer. She engages in a constant dialogue with her readers, telling stories about herself and her family, sprinkling the text with genuine witticisms and excruciatingly corny puns, and making sure everybody knows that cooking is not an occult science or esoteric art, but part of the everyday work of the vast majority of women (and a few men) that can be turned into fun with her help.

Irma is not perfect. True to her era and the society in which she lived as a highly privileged matron accustomed to having a household staff at her disposal, she is unembarrassed about quoting, in dialect, the quaint sayings of "colored" acquaintances or employees. And the downside of being an American institution is the positively hideous food to be found in *Joy*. How's this for a tomato sauce in which to serve hard-boiled eggs: "1 can of tomato soup, undiluted, to which 1 tablespoon of butter has been added." Or this, identified by Irma as "a winner in the race for time":

1 can tuna (7 oz)
Use the fish can to measure an equal amount
of condensed cream soup
2 tablespoons milk
Season, heat, and serve

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Or this, to be found in all versions of the book, including 1997: Golden Glow Salad, a mixture of canned pineapple, shredded carrots, and lemon jello. "Serve with mayonnaise."

But Irma always redeems her faults with her intelligence and humor. After describing how to eat steamed clams, she says, "This is a bathtub dish."

About soybeans: "They really need an uplift, being on the dull side but, like dull people, respond readily to the right contacts."

As a note preceding forty-nine recipes for "variety meats": "The following is a hush-hush section, just between us girls."

"The chicken is a world citizen to be found everywhere along with Coca-Cola, the Singer sewing machine, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and Hollywood movies."

"When it comes to cooking vegetables, many cooks seem to suffer from arrested development."

"Henrietta's recipes made mouth-watering reading. That, as Archie of *Duffy's Tavern* would say, is the 'ipso,' but the 'facto' is that they are almost impossible to follow."

About using a modernized version of a recipe: "Even a German Cherry Cake rule must bow to the Zeitgeist."

The Joy of Cooking has always been a family enterprise, and through all the revisions of the work as it changed and expanded from 1931 through 1975 it has been recognizable as essentially the same book. In 1951, for the third revision, Irma's daughter Marion Becker joined her mother as coauthor, and after Irma's death in 1962 Marion continued as author through the book's fifth revision, published in 1975 shortly after Marion's death. That edition sold about 100,000 copies per year between 1975 and 1997, by which time fourteen million copies of *Joy* had been sold.

As one might expect, Irma's voice was the only one heard through the first two revisions and it continued to dominate even in the third, though Marion as coauthor injected her own (sometimes questionable) theories concerning healthful cooking and eating. By the time the fifth revision was published in 1975, the book had come more and more to resemble an encyclopedia, giving "definitive" information on a very wide range of subjects and, in the end, losing most of what made it interesting.

In 1997 the "All-New-All-Purpose" super-duper large-format four-pound revision was published. Thinking that they can find everything they want (or ought) to know about food and cooking in one place, Americans have bought about 1.5 million copies in the two years plus since this edition was published. It's not appropriate to call this *Joy* a revision. Except for the title and a few recipes, this book, put together by a team of "experts" and purporting to offer a complete guide to worldwide foods and cooking, has little connection to the *Joy of Cooking* thousands of Americans know and love.

Here's a sample of the evolution of the introductory material about potatoes: 1951: "In recent years the mania for girth control has played havoc with the fair name of the potato—bringing 'insinuendoes' against it." 1975: "In recent years, potatoes have been maligned as over-caloric—although they are equal in this respect to the same-sized apple." 1997: "Potatoes fall into three types. Potatoes containing relatively high moisture and low starch . . . are called boilers." On salad dressing, in 1951: "Ingredients for good [salad] dressings should be mutually stimulating without incongruities or an individual striving for supremacy of flavor." 1997: "A salad dressing is best described as an uncooked sauce and, like all sauces, its role is to enhance the flavor of the food."

The differences between this new *Joy* and the one published twenty-three years ago reflect the revolution that has taken place in America's cultural life. Does anybody want to listen to a crotchety, self-confident individual anymore, especially if she might be considered old-fashioned and irreverent about what we can only call food-worship, who doesn't even have the credentials that have come to be accepted as de rigueur in the food writing/cooking/eating world? The editor of the 1997 *Joy* says "everybody works for a living now. Cooking has become more of a noble calling. It's not something you have to do." And who now wants to do it, in the unpretentious and cheerful way Irma did? Who respects the craft, the humble work of daily life, the universe of home, where "amateur" and "professional" have little meaning? Who cares about all the dimensions of how we nourish ourselves, the geographic, agricultural, economic, and religious traditions that imbue our food with richness and meaning, when they can get a series of formulas, a quick fix on any nation's specialties? Who will be impressed that Irma Rombauer (who, quite as a matter of course, cites or quotes Jane Austen, Willa Cather, Aldous Huxley, Fred Allen, Saki, and Groucho Marx, among others) lives in a literate universe?

Irma's voice is gone, replaced by a bland, impersonal, collective presence that lacks what was best about the old *Joy*: the unmistakable companionship of a humorous, friendly guide. Gone, too, are all the Finn family favorites: the Bunny Cake covered in fluffy white icing with broom straw whiskers and

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raisin eyes, snuggling into its bed of jelly beans every Easter; the Hurry-up Cake and Butterscotch Brownies, our contribution to dozens of school parties and bake sales; Mincemeat Drop Cookies, a surprisingly delicious way to stretch my green tomato mincemeat. The ice cream chapter, which included more than sixty recipes in 1951, is gone without a trace. Can this be progress?

We'll have to wait and see whether the youngsters whose introduction to *Joy* is this lowest-common-denominator compendium are still buying it twenty years from now. In the meantime, keep an eye out for the 1951 edition, my favorite and the one I've given my daughters. It crops up regularly in second-hand bookstores.

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Karl Barth
Dogmatics in Outline
(1947)

Stanley Hauerwas

In 1946, standing amid the ruins of Bonn University, Karl Barth gave the lectures that we now know as *Dogmatics in Outline*. He lectured without a script, because as he tells us, the "primitive conditions which I met with in Germany made it absolutely necessary for me to 'talk' instead of to 'read.'" In fact Barth says it was impossible for him to be only an academic teacher (which he confesses came easy since he had never been that). But rather he had to be a kind of missionary, Sunday School teacher, and popular orator. Yet the result was and is a beautiful book that witnesses to the God who alone gives us hope that we can live in a world in which war is not assumed to be a given.

FIRST THINGS, I assume, is committed to the proposition that God matters for all that is matter. That God, moreover, is not just any god, but the God who has made Himself known to us in Israel and Jesus Christ. It is not easy to speak well of such a God in a world that might assume God is but another piece in the metaphysical furniture of the universe. Even the most "orthodox" in such a world often discover that in spite of themselves, their speech about God turns out to be speech that serves to underwrite idolatry. *Dogmatics in Outline* is Barth's short, but intense, course in how to speak of God in a world that has lost the habits of faithful Christian speech.

When he delivered the lectures in Bonn, Barth was sixty years old and he was working on the third volume of the *Church Dogmatics*. Barth lectured extemporaneously, but the words he spoke were ones that could come only from a life of struggle with the Bible. Indeed, one of the attractions of *Dogmatics in Outline*—in form, a commentary on the Apostles' Creed—is that it really is an outline of Barth's much larger *Church Dogmatics*. In the "Foreword" to the paperback edition of these lectures, Barth expresses some concern that some may try to substitute the reading of *Dogmatics in Outline* for the *Dogmatics*. Anyone who would do so he condemns by quoting Paul—"If any one will not work, let him not eat."

Barth understood that recovering Christian speech is work and it is a work that the world literally cannot live without. The heart of Barth's theology is the presumption that if we get God wrong, we get everything wrong—our politics, our science, our art, our very lives. Moreover, he thought the wars that had wracked this century were the result of our making ourselves rather than God the beginning and end of existence. *Dogmatics in Outline*, indeed the whole of the *Dogmatics*, was Barth's attempt to help us regain the language adequate to our situation as creatures created to praise our Creator and thus capable of living at peace with one another.

Barth coyly observes, "A Christian Father once rightly said that *Deus non est in genere*, 'God is not a particular instance within a class.'" That "Father" was, of course, Thomas Aquinas; and Barth, in spite of his attack on natural theology, knew he shared far more with Aquinas than he did with many Protestant theologians. Barth, like Aquinas, knew that God is God and we are not, and (also like Aquinas) took on the hard task of helping recover the grammar of the God Who is Trinity. Barth thought this work important because it cannot help but force men to speak and live precisely. For to say that "Jesus is Lord" overturns the presumption that we, not God, rule the world.

Consider, for example, Barth's claim: "Men are timeless when we are without God and without Christ. Then we have no time. But this timelessness he has overcome. Christ has time, the fullness of time. He sitteth at the right hand of God as he who has come, who has acted and suffered and triumphed in death. His session at God's right hand is not just the extract of this history; it is the eternal within this history." Accordingly Christians need not

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leap Lessing's ditch separating the necessary truths justified by reason from the claims of faith justified only by history and tradition. Our God's history "is indeed an accidental truth of history." Our task is not to try to fit God into our histories, but rather to understand the good news that God has made us part of His history.

God's history, moreover, cannot be told or lived without the living presence of the Jews: "If as Christians we thought that church and synagogue no longer affected one another, everything would be lost." Barth's comment about the Jews is not an attempt to "make up" for the destruction of the Jews but rather a reminder to Christians that Hitler's hatred of the Jews must be read as a judgment on our unfaithfulness to our Lord. Our recognition that our God is the Lord of history requires that we recognize that Jesus was "of necessity a Jew. . . . The problem of Israel is—since the problem of Christ is inseparable from it—the problem of existence as such. The man who is ashamed of Israel is ashamed of Jesus Christ and therefore of his own existence."

In the midst of his lectures at Bonn, Barth was asked if he was aware that many of the people at the lectures were not Christians. With his usual good humor and the sheer joy he found in theology freely done, Barth responded, "It makes no difference to me." Theology becomes a burden only when we take our unbelief seriously. Only faith is to be taken seriously—a faith, moreover, that recognizes that "we are not nearer to believing in God the Creator than we are to believing that Jesus Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. It is not the case that the truth about God the Creator is directly accessible to us and that only the truth of the second article needs a revelation." In both cases we are faced by the mystery of God and the recognition that our existence is the work of grace.

That God and man have become one in Jesus Christ, however, has made through Christ's ascension not only the possibility but the necessity of the visible witnesses in the world called Church. Barth knew such witnesses could not help but appear in the world as "strangely human persons." How could we not but appear strange, believing as we do that we are timeless, if God has not in fact redeemed us in Christ? Just to the extent that those committed to the witness of First Things might be tempted to forget our strangeness, I can think of no better reminder than a yearly reading of *Dogmatics in Outline.*

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Rebecca West
Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia
(1941)

Alan Jacobs

In the spring of 1936, the British Council invited Rebecca West to lecture in Yugoslavia. Thanks to the rise of the Nazis and the ongoing depredations of Stalinism, tensions were rising in the Balkans—as if they had not historically been high enough. West wrote to an official of the Council that the country would inevitably be "overrun either by Germany or, under Russian direction, by communism; which would destroy its character, blot out its inheritance from Byzantium." Soon she would realize, if she did not already, that that "inheritance from Byzantium" was also a tense and complex thing, since the Byzantium of Christian Orthodoxy was also the Istanbul of the Muslim Ottoman Empire. Here was a land whose past, present, and future placed it always at the intersection of immensely powerful states, empires, and faiths. It was a place, West soon learned, of endlessly fascinating complication, and a place that was gravely endangered.

In the following years she would make two more trips to Yugoslavia, covering every province of the country from Croatia and Dalmatia through Bosnia and Serbia and on to Montenegro. All the time she was writing an account of what she saw, an account that began as an imagined "short book" but gradually transformed itself into one of the largest, most ambitious, and greatest books of the twentieth century. In *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* West would combine her three journeys into one, changing names, linking events, and amplifying characters—but also spinning marvelous historical cadenzas. No one has written more compellingly than West about the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand, which sparked what then was called the Great War, or about the tragic failure of the Emperor Stephen Dushan, or about the key moment in Serbian history, the crushing defeat of the Serbian people by the Ottoman Turks on the plain of Kosovo in 1389. (In the Vrdnik monastery in the Frushka Gora of Serbia, West saw, still lying in state, the headless body of Prince Lazar, who led the Serbs in that debacle. She touched his blackened and dessicated hand.)

West's story is in at least one respect a classic tale of the modern world: the encounter of

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the liberal mind with something much older than itself, something alien to it—something fully historical. She begins her narrative with frequent expressions of her disdain for the Croats, whom she believes sold their precious birthright for the cold pottage of the money and power offered them by the Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Croats she met were proud of their links with the West, links that in West's mind (and especially as German expansionism comes back to terrible life) should have been their greatest shame. Her love is reserved for the Serbs, who remained faithful to their Eastern and Orthodox and Slavic roots; she has a kind of Rousseauian passion for their "primitive" attachment to their own history.

But as she goes deeper into Serbia, she sees more and more clearly a side of this attachment that is dark and inexplicable to her. She thinks of a place called the Sheep's Field in Macedonia, where these people whose "preference for the agreeable over the disagreeable" she loves meet at an ancient stone to sacrifice animals, in hopes of making women fertile. ("But what they were doing at the rock was abominable.") She thinks above all of the strange fact that Prince Lazar is the greatest hero in Serbian history, not in spite of but because he lost the battle: the prophet Elijah, in the form of a gray falcon, demands that he choose between an earthly and a heavenly kingdom, and he chooses the latter. To the Serbs this is an act of great courage and piety, since the blood of so many of Lazar's people will therefore be on his hands; to West, it is an abysmal revelation:

> "If this be so," I said to myself, "if it be a law that those who are born into the world with a preference for the agreeable over the disagreeable are born also with an impulse towards defeat, then the whole world is a vast Kosovo, an abominable blood-logged plain, where people who love go out to fight people who hate, and betray their cause to their enemies, so that loving is persecuted for immense tracts of history, far longer than its little periods of victory." I began to weep, for the left-wing people among whom I had lived all my life had in their attitude to foreign politics achieved such a betrayal. They were always right, they never imposed their rightness. "If this disposition to be at once Christ and Judas is inborn," I thought, "we might as well die, and the sooner the better, for the defeat is painful after the lovely promise."

A few years earlier, West had written an angry and sometimes scornful biography of St. Augustine, but here she comes very close to an Augustinian view of the world. She does not, I believe, understand all that she sees, but she sees with a clarity almost unparalleled in this century.

When she finished her manuscript in early 1941, it was almost half-a-million words long. This was unfortunate, because in the midst of the war paper was being strictly rationed. But West's publishers, Macmillan of London, seem not to have hesitated: they were utterly compelled by the narrative. As her editor wrote, "Who would not be [compelled] by a book which demonstrated by its argument that the East End of London would not be lying in ruins if the Balkan Christian powers had not been defeated by the Turks in 1389?"

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C. S. Lewis
That Hideous Strength
(1945)

Phillip E. Johnson

Most futuristic novels seem out-of-date after a decade or two, but *That Hideous Strength* is more timely today than when the book was published in 1945. On the day I began to reread the book for this essay, the press reported that a British government agency called the Human Fertilization and Embryological Authority (HFEA) is sounding out public opinion about the use of Pre-implanatation Genetic Diagnosis, which will allow parents to screen their embryos for genetic defects. Critics believe that the HFEA has already decided to go full steam ahead with the procedure, and they don't believe the Authority's assurances that this technique (and others to follow) will be used only to screen for genetic diseases like cystic fibrosis and not to produce "designer babies."

My suspicion that the critics are right was bolstered by an article appearing on the Web the same day from the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, titled "What is Immoral About Eugenics?" The article's bottom line was that the use of genetic technology to produce the kind of children parents want, up to and including "eyebrow shape or freckle pattern," should be allowed if the parents are not coerced

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and the children are not thereby disadvantaged. The role of ethics commissions in these situations is mainly to legitimate what the technocrats want to happen—namely, a reengineering of the human genome to improve the breeding stock. And why not, if the existing genome is merely the accidental product of mindless material forces? Since our ideas about ethics or the sanctity of life are also assumed to be products of genetic or brain chemistry, there is no reason to let them get in the way of progress.

In C. S. Lewis' novel, the technological superagency is the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments (NICE), which is empowered to solve all sorts of social and genetic problems without being bothered by "red tape." Mark and Jane Studdock are a young childless academic couple at Bracton College, whose faculty's Progressive Element is willing to sell its woods and its soul to entice the NICE. Mark and Jane's marriage is unhappy because, like most modern people, they see marriage as a contract for mutual advantage rather than as a sacred union. Mark's consuming desire doesn't even involve Jane. He wants to be a big shot, a member of the "inner ring" first at his college and then at the NICE. He gets his chance because he is good at writing propaganda.

The NICE turns out to be demonic in inspiration, and intends to impose upon England a regime of ruthless social engineering that Joseph Stalin would have admired. The apparent "Head" at the NICE's mansion at Belbury is the head of a guillotined murderer, kept alive with advanced life support systems, but this gruesome object is merely the conduit for orders from the dark powers. Belbury's human leaders recruit and flatter Mark, but the human resource they really want is Jane. She is a seer, whose visions involve the return to life of the magician Merlin, long entombed under Bracton Wood. If Belbury can unite its materialist magic with Merlin's old-fashioned kind, it can achieve its dream of freeing the mind from messy organic life. "In us organic life has produced Mind. It has done its work. After that we want no more of it."

Does that sound far-fetched? Artificial intelligence visionaries are keen to make it a reality. While the biologists make plans to reprogram the human genome, the cybergurus dream of uploading the human mind into advanced computers. Freed of the limitations of biology and possessed of superhuman intelligence, these "spiritual machines" might explore and conquer the cosmos. Or they might not bother to do so, since they could create a virtual reality for themselves that would be better than the real thing. Then "we" would truly be like God. But who is "we"? In real life, as in C. S. Lewis' fiction, the dark side of the technological utopia is that it implies a huge difference in power between the few who do the programming and the many who are programmed. Belbury's chief scientist understands that "it is not Man who will be omnipotent, it is some one man, some immortal man." Those who understand what is at stake pursue a murderous rivalry to gain control of the power to program.

Belbury's plot is foiled and Mark's soul is saved when the risen Merlin joins forces with a small Christian enclave that is in communication with heavenly powers. Although magic and miracles play their part, in the end it is more the bravery of decent people and the self-destructive hatred of the wicked that decides the outcome.

To me, *That Hideous Strength* is a thrilling story that I enjoy more each time I reread it, but I have heard others say that the action is contrived, the characters one-dimensional, and the tone didactic. I suppose you could say the same of *Paradise Lost.* My guess is that those of us who love the book see it less as a fantasy and more as a realistic description of what eventually happens when people make technology their lord instead of putting their faith and love to the service of the true Creator. Like our modern mind-scientists, Belbury employs materialist philosophy to teach that the human mind and spirit are mere epiphenomena of bodily chemistry. Like our government-funded artists, Belbury uses art to mock the sacred and train the mind to see the perverse as normal. That's not fantasy. That's how we got where we are.

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Jacques Maritain
Integral Humanism
(1936)

Michael S. Joyce

For many of us coming of age in the early 1960s, our first serious exposure to the notion that "public life is not the first thing"—but that there do exist "first things (principles) for the right ordering of public life"—came in the writings of Jacques Mar-

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itain, particularly in *Humanisme Intégral* (translated by Geoffrey Bles in 1939 as *True Humanism*; the more recent English versions call it *Integral Humanism*). He taught us that the human person is both material and spiritual, and can become more than a merely self-interested individual by acquiring and practicing the habits necessary to actualize his humanity. Indeed, man may rise to the heights of reason and purpose latent within his nature, most efficaciously through prayerful communion with other persons under divine guidance.

The best political order, Maritain maintained, would encourage a true humanism reflecting this understanding of the human "made as he is in God's image and likeness." All forms of statism, however, tend to stifle the human essence, based as they are on the immoral philosophy of materialism—a shortcoming shared by the truncated kind of secular humanism that reduces man to a partial, isolated, utterly autonomous individual. Integral humanism is cultivated, though, within "revitalized democracy," wherein "we are confronted with the fact that religion and metaphysics are an essential part of human culture, primary and indispensable incentives in the very life of society." Maritain's democracy would respect human difference and pluralism because, following his and our greatest teacher, St. Thomas Aquinas, it would never disparage or ignore the human person on earth, and would recognize the central role played by work, pleasure, and creativity unfolded in the natural associations of family, church, and community.

The insights of these two great teachers led me and many of my fellow pilgrims to be deeply critical of the modern forces that corroded the "mediating structures" essential for the humane ordering of public life. Capitalism in particular—whether manifested in savage markets, an oppressive state, or an imperialist military—seemed especially corrosive and repugnant in theory and practice. With all the intellectual hubris characteristic of young adults, I was convinced not only of my command of the tenets of the *philosophia perennis*, but also of my ideological and moral goodness. In short, I was firmly ensconced on the Christian left, where also was to be found my teacher Maritain. Or so I thought.

It is often said that it takes at least a decade for new ideas to filter down from the scholar's pen to the consciousness of common folk. This was certainly the case for me. Sometime in the early 1970s, I came across Maritain's decade-old *Reflections on America*. Reflecting his experience of living in America, Maritain confessed that "it took a rather long time for me to become aware of the kind of congeniality between what is going on in this country" and the democracy that he had described earlier. Considering now the "*direction* of certain essential trends characteristic of American civilization . . . *Humanisme Intégral* . . . had, so to speak, an affinity with the American climate by anticipation."

So while I had been peering down contemptuously on the American scene from the heights of moral superiority, my teacher had been learning from his experience in my land. By the time Maritain died in 1973, I was having second thoughts about this self-governing republic of democratic capitalism, and was yearning for a moral defense of it that could rival the left's moral critique. And along came Michael Novak, among whose many books is *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* (1982), a must read for FIRST THINGS subscribers.

Novak argued that the descriptions of Americans by both critics and proponents by no means reflect reality. The typical American citizen did not aspire to be "a rugged individual, isolated and alone. To be independent, yes, and also self-reliant. Yet also to be an active member of many communities, to be open to appeals from the needy, to be informed about the world at large, and to care about its problems." American democratic capitalism in fact cultivated a unique associational or communal spirit that at once freed the individual from the stifling village traditionalism of the past, while encouraging free attachment to "intermediate associations" that would keep the individual from slipping into loneliness and isolation. Associations would cultivate the habits of self-control and other civic virtues essential to counter the corrosive potential of freedom, and would give ordinary citizens the opportunity to develop the God-given human potential so important to Maritain. Beneath the mask that had beguiled democratic capitalism's friends and foes alike, "the hidden ideal of democratic capitalism is that of the communitarian individual."

With the editors and readers of FIRST THINGS, Novak is persuaded that public life is not the first thing, but that there are in fact first things or first principles for the right ordering of public life. Working in the tradition of St. Thomas and Maritain, Novak helped us understand that democratic capitalism is the ordering of public life most congenial to the realization of first things by its citizens. This side of the Kingdom of God, we can ask no more of the political order than the cultivation of the communitarian individual.

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Aldous Huxley
Brave New World
(1932)

Leon R. Kass

The urgency of the great political struggles of the twentieth century, successfully waged against totalitarianisms first right and then left, seems to have blinded many people to a deeper truth about the present age: all contemporary societies, the open ones no less than the closed, are traveling briskly in the same utopian direction. All are wedded to the modern technological project; all march eagerly to the drums of progress and fly proudly the banner of modern science; all sing loudly the Baconian anthem, "Conquer nature, relieve man's estate."

Leading the triumphal procession is modern medicine, the epitome of compassionate humanitarianism, becoming every day ever more powerful in its battle against disease, decay, and death, thanks especially to the astonishing achievements in biomedical science and technology—achievements for which we must surely be grateful. Yet contemplating present and projected advances in genetic and reproductive technologies, in neuroscience and psychopharmacology, and in the development of artificial organs and computer-chip implants for human brains, we now clearly recognize new uses for biotechnical power that soar beyond the traditional medical goals of healing disease and relieving suffering. Human nature itself lies on the operating table, ready for alteration, "enhancement," and wholesale redesign.

Some transforming powers are already here. The pill. In vitro fertilization. Bottled embryos. Surrogate wombs. Cloning. Genetic screening. Organ harvests. Mechanical spare parts. Chimeras. Brain implants. Ritalin for the young, Viagra for the old, and Prozac for everyone. And, to leave this vale of tears, a little extra morphine accompanied by Muzak. What? You still have troubles? Not to worry. As the vaudevillians used to say, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Years ago Aldous Huxley saw it coming. More important, he knew what it meant and, in his charming but disturbing novel, *Brave New World*, Huxley made it strikingly visible for all to see. *Brave New World* is not a great book, and, in purely literary terms, even the author found it seriously flawed. Yet, in my experience, its power increases with each rereading, and coming generations of readers should—and I hope will—find it still more compelling. For unlike other frightening futuristic novels of the past century, such as Orwell's already dated *Nineteen Eighty-four*, Huxley shows us a dystopia that goes with, rather than against, the human grain—indeed, it is animated by modernity's most humane and progressive aspirations. Following those aspirations to their ultimate realization, Huxley enables us to recognize those less obvious but often more pernicious evils that are inextricably linked to successful attainment of partial goods. And he strongly suggests that we must choose: either our misery-ridden but still richly human world, or the squalid happiness of the biotechnical world to come.

In this satirical novel, Huxley paints human life seven centuries hence, living under the gentle hand of a compassionate humanitarianism that has been rendered fully competent by genetic manipulation, psychopharmacology, hypnopeaedia, and high-tech amusements. At long last, mankind has succeeded in eliminating disease, aggression, war, pain, anxiety, suffering, hatred, guilt, envy, and grief. But this victory comes at a heavy price: homogenization, mediocrity, pacification, spurious contentment, trivial pursuits, shallow attachments, debasement of tastes, and souls without loves or longings.

The Brave New World has achieved prosperity, community, stability, and nigh-universal contentment, only to be peopled by creatures of human shape but of stunted humanity. They consume, fornicate, take "soma" and "violent passion surrogate," enjoy "Riemann-surface tennis" and "centrifugal bumble-puppy," and operate the machinery that makes it all possible. They do not read, write, think, love, or govern themselves. Creativity and curiosity, reason and passion, exist only in a rudimentary and mutilated form. Art and science, virtue and religion, family and friendship are all passé. What matters most is present satisfaction: "Never put off till tomorrow the fun you can have today." Like Midas, brave new man will be cursed to acquire precisely what he wished for only to discover—painfully and too late—that what he wished for is not exactly what he wanted. Or, Huxley implies, worse than Midas, he may be so dehumanized that he will not even recognize that in aspiring to be perfect he is no longer even human.

Huxley's novel is, of course, science fiction. But yesterday's science fiction is rapidly becoming today's fact. Prozac is not yet Huxley's soma; cloning by nuclear transfer or splitting embryos is not exactly Bokanovskification; MTV and virtual-reality parlors are not quite the "feelies"; and our current safe-and-consequenceless sexual practices are not universally as loveless or as empty as in the novel. But the kinships are disquieting, all the more so since our technologies of bio-psycho-engineering are still in

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their infancy—and it is all too clear what they might look like in their full maturity. Indeed, the cultural changes technology has already wrought among us should make us even more worried than Huxley would have us be.

In Huxley's novel, everyone without exception is genetically programmed and psychologically conditioned, beginning even before birth, under the direction of an omnipotent—albeit benevolent—world state. Accordingly, for Huxley, it is lack of freedom that will be the major price of engineered "perfection," including the freedom to be unhappy. But the dehumanization he portrays does not really require despotism or external control. To the contrary, precisely because the society of the future will deliver exactly what people most want—health, safety, comfort, plenty, pleasure, peace of mind, and length of days—mankind can reach the same humanly debased condition solely on the basis of free human choice. No need for World Controllers. Just give us the technological imperative, liberal democratic society, compassionate humanitarianism, moral pluralism, and free markets, and we can take ourselves to Brave New World all by ourselves. If you require evidence, just look around.

In our age of cultural unraveling and dissolving moral agreement, it is heartening that readers are still revolted by Huxley's picture of the life to which, absent some moral and religious reawakening, our cherished prejudices will take us. While philosophical essays and moral exhortation are today largely impotent, good literature can—at least for now—capture our impoverished imaginations and thus keep the human flame aflicker.

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Michael Walzer
Just and Unjust Wars
(1977)

Gilbert Meilaender

War, like the poor, we have always with us. Continued reflection upon warfare is, therefore, one of the first things that must occupy the public life of any people. And anyone needing to engage in such reflection could scarcely find a better place to start than Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations.* As an opponent of the Vietnam War, Walzer promised himself that he would write such a book, and it transcended the occasion that produced it. Rich with historical illustrations rather than merely hypothetical cases, the book pushes its readers into the complexities of moral judgment. Reckoning with the fact that war is always hell, never falling into the trap of confusing mere violence with force, Walzer tries to think about our responsibilities within that hell—to carve out a moral regime even in the midst of hell.

Central to the morality of war is a tension between two kinds of judgments we make about it: judgments about the circumstances under which it is permissible to wage war, and judgments about what it is permissible to do in the conduct of war. But these two kinds of judgments may sometimes pull in different directions. What if the "good guys" (who have the best of reasons for waging war) seem able to win only if they fight in ways that are not permitted—and thereby become "bad guys"? What then?

Walzer develops the tradition of just war as a deontological tradition—that is, even the good guys are not allowed to do just anything that is necessary to win. Even they must fight justly, and if they do they may sometimes lose. There is no guarantee that truth and goodness will always triumph in human history. Sometimes the good guys must accept losing; they must fight justly, refuse to win by evil means, refuse to let good consequences outweigh evil methods, and bide their time as they wait for another day. That is the first and central response Walzer makes to the tension between the two sorts of moral judgment we make about war.

Nevertheless, consequences do matter. How could they not in politics, a realm in which some accept responsibility for the lives of many others? So Walzer considers the possibility that a time might come when the good guys simply had to win. Why? Because not to win would mean handing over our neighbors not just to an enemy but to an abomination. What kind of enemy would that be? It would, Walzer answers, be a "Nazi-like power," one that simply had to be defeated, whatever it might take.

In such a moment, which Walzer calls a moment of "supreme emergency," leaders have, he thinks, little choice but to let the consequences count. They embrace evil and accept guilt because, as political leaders responsible for others, they can do nothing else. They bomb German cities because the Nazi regime must be defeated—though if they bomb them longer than necessary, bomb them even when

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it would be possible to defeat that regime by morally acceptable (though slower and more costly) means, they have given in too easily and imagined they faced a supreme emergency when they did not.

Some moralists would argue that Walzer would have done better never to develop the notion of supreme emergency, never to accept that there could come a moment when the good guys would have to do evil. For then how can they still be good? Perhaps such moralists are right. It is certainly the central moral issue, and Walzer displays it for his readers with great imagination and force.

But what makes this book a "must read" is that he does still more. Grant, for the moment, the course of his argument. Grant that there might come a time when good—even the best—political leaders might have to dirty their hands in order to defeat an enemy that must be beaten. What then? To answer this question, Walzer reflects upon what he calls "the dishonoring of Arthur Harris."

After the bombing of German cities had succeeded and the war had been won, Britain needed to find a way to reinstate the moral rules it had—in the moment of supreme emergency—overridden. Walzer interprets the dishonoring of Arthur Harris as such a reinstatement. Harris had directed the British Bomber Command's campaign of terror against German cities. He had, it is perhaps not too strong to say, been good enough to be on the right side but not too good to do what was needed in Britain's time of peril.

After the war he expected his reward: public honor. He received none, however, and finally left Britain and returned to his native Rhodesia. By dishonoring him, Britain dissociated itself from what had been done—it reinstated the moral code. We may, Walzer grants, feel that this is not quite fair to Harris, but it may be the best a people can manage.

Notice: the dishonoring of Arthur Harris does not solve the moral problem Walzer has unfolded. In the moment of supreme emergency the laws of war are overridden but not set aside, and those who override them are guilty for doing what they "had" to do. There is, in fact, no moral solution to this problem.

When Walzer reaches for "dishonoring" as a way of reinstating the once overridden moral code, he gropes for something that is better called religious than moral. Though Walzer himself never says so, who can doubt that Arthur Harris is the scapegoat of Leviticus 16—sent off into the wilderness on the day of atonement, bearing the sins of the people?

At the deepest reaches of morality we discover that we need something more than morality itself can offer: expiation. Whether Walzer himself intended it or not, that is where *Just and Unjust Wars* leads the reader. We see, in the end, what moral reasoning alone cannot accomplish.

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Thomas S. Kuhn
The Structure of Scientific Revolutions
(1962)

Daniel P. Moloney

Hailed by the poststructuralist left, wielded by feminists and fundamentalists alike, and hated by most practitioners of the field it purports to explain, Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is perhaps the single most important work on the nature of rationality since Descartes' *Meditations.*

To support this assertion, a little background. In the years immediately following World War II, most philosophers of science were logical positivists who believed that science involved two stages: first empirical research, then logical analysis of the results. Experimental science provided the raw data, while philosophers analyzed that data and clarified the theories used to explain it. Any statement that could not be verified by science—"The universe has a first cause" or "God is infinitely wise," for example—these philosophers considered meaningless. Only by rigorous conceptual analysis and the rooting out of all unverifiable statements could scientists achieve certainty.

In the late 1940s, Kuhn, then a doctoral student in physics at Harvard, was asked to teach a course introducing nonscientists to the practices of science. As he later wrote, "To my complete surprise, that exposure to out-of-date scientific theory and practice radically undermined some of my basic conceptions about the nature of science and the reasons for its special success." As a result, Kuhn turned his attention to the history of scientific revolutions—those times when one widely held scientific theory is challenged on a fundamental level by another and

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eventually replaced. The best-known revolutions are associated with Copernicus, Newton, and Einstein in physics, but equally fundamental revolutions occurred with Lavoisier in chemistry, Maxwell in electromagnetism, and Planck in atomic theory, among others. Kuhn's studies revealed that at the time these revolutionary theories were proposed, there was no rational way to determine which theory was correct.

Although Copernicus simplified certain astronomical calculations by suggesting that the sun—not the earth—was the center of the universe, he did not *explain* the observed movements of the stars any better than the geocentric theory he opposed. Most astronomers were willing to treat his theory as a mathematical shortcut, a way of looking at reality from a different perspective, but they did not actually subscribe to it as fact. Yet some astronomers, Kuhn found, were also Renaissance Neoplatonists and Neopythagoreans, believing that mathematics was the basis of all truth and beauty. For them, the simpler calculations that Copernicus' theory permitted were enough to make a strong case for its truth. Despite what the textbooks say, it was not the logical consequences of astronomical observations that persuaded the first Copernicans; they believed the new theory because it fit with their peculiar religious theories about astrology and numerology.

Kuhn's own experience as a physicist bore this out. Scientists, like other people, have to make decisions about what projects to pursue and how to allocate their time. Younger scientists have to decide which research projects will get them tenure or grants or control of a laboratory. Older scientists have their reputations to defend. In addition, scientific articles are taken seriously only if published in certain journals, so research is constrained by what the editors of those journals will accept. What the scientific community takes up depends on all sorts of personality conflicts, nonrational prejudices, logistical problems, and what insurance companies call "acts of God." Kuhn realized that because science textbooks were more useful if they just taught the conclusions and methods of science without all the false starts and theories discarded along the way, the story science told about itself ignored the ambiguity of its actual practice.

Kuhn thought that these sociological factors explained why scientists would not divide up into the warring schools that marked other disciplines. Most of "normal" science consisted of problem-solving rather than research into fundamentals, because the pedagogy and institutions of science discouraged researchers from questioning the principles of the current scientific paradigm. Moreover, Kuhn argued (and this forever endeared him to postmodernists), a scientist's indoctrination into the reigning paradigm was usually so complete that it affected his observations and experiments. Scientists don't just conduct experiments to collect raw facts, but to prove or disprove some hypothesis. The hypothesis determines which variables to isolate and which to ignore, and they limit the acceptable explanations of the results.

Science is successful because scientists deliberately restrict their vision and their imagination in order to see some particular thing better. Kuhn showed that in doing so science also bound itself to a set of assumptions that it did not even recognize as such. Enough surprising or anomalous results can make the assumptions of a long-held theory visible again, but only if some free-thinking scientist pulls back from his hypothesis long enough to look at the big picture. The conservative culture of science discourages such free thinking as unscientific; Kuhn's achievement was to show that many of the great scientists of paradigms past were "unscientific" by this standard.

The Enlightenment view of reason defined rational arguments as those so clear, and consequently so certain, that no sincere person could reject them without being suspected of perversity. Kuhn showed that, within a paradigm, this view holds most of the time. But brilliant scientists who engage in different research programs based on different assumptions—i.e., who, in Kuhn's terminology, inhabit different paradigms—can have fundamental disagreements without ceasing to be brilliant scientists. We know this holds in other disciplines—literary criticism, for example. It is just that we believed that scientific reasoning, reasoning at its best, would not be subject to the same uncertainties. Kuhn, by pulling back the curtain on real scientific practice, showed scientific reasoning to be just a species of dialectic, perhaps more disciplined than others, but not in principle different or indubitable.

The exciting result is that scientific reason can now be seen to be of a piece with the other great forms of dialectical reason in history: the Greek dialectic of Plato and Aristotle and the Scholastic *disputationes* of Aquinas. All of these marry a high level of logical rigor and an all-out pursuit of the truth with a method that appeals to an entire community to judge which arguments are the most sound. If reason is communal in this way, then Descartes' *Meditations* and Enlightenment epistemology in general are flawed. Sitting alone in his room, someone might be unable to tell his dreams from reality, but when

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engaged in a multifaceted discussion with very different sorts of people, one must concede that there is more to the reality he experiences than his imagination can contain. And if reason is communal, then it involves not just information and logic but rhetoric and poetry, charity and sensitivity, self-confidence and mutual respect. Most of all, it involves creating and sustaining a culture of inquiry, a high-level conversation that can include many voices without losing its direction. Kuhn called it a paradigm. Hans Urs von Balthasar compared it to a symphony.

Around here we call it A Journal of Religion and Public Life.

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Andrew F. Walls
The Missionary Movement in Christian History
(1996)

Mark A. Noll

The importance of the Christian tradition for the concerns, inquiries, and reflections constituting First Things (the magazine) and "first things" (the substantial reality) is patent. Without claiming an exclusive Christian monopoly over the resources necessary for laboring at the task, it still is the case that for much of the West the lessons, history, and counsels of Christianity remain the most fruitful place to begin an assessment of religion and public life. But not, as it now turns out, only for the West.

Since 1900, while the world's population has multiplied 3.7 times, the number of identifiable Christians in Europe has increased by a factor of only 1.5 and in North America by a factor of 3.6. By contrast, over the same century the number of Christians in the Pacific islands has multiplied by 4.9, in Asia by 14.8, and in Africa an astounding 38.3 times. Where there were approximately nine million identifiable Christians in Africa in 1900, there are now over 330 million. On the basis of twentieth-century trends, the missiologist David Barrett projects that within thirty years, the number of Christians in Africa and Latin America each will outstrip the number in Europe, while the number of Christians in Africa will approach three times the number in North America.

Such a massive alteration in the geography of Christian adherence has created a burgeoning need to assess prospects of religion and public life from fresh angles—in Nairobi as well as New York, in Buenos Aires as well as Brussels, in Rio as well as Rome, in Hangchow, Hanoi, and Hong Kong as well as Hanover. One would think that such changes would have spawned a raft of thought-provoking books. Such, unfortunately, has not been the case.

To be sure, the number of authors writing seriously about the new demography of the Christian world has grown rapidly to include, among others, Gerald Anderson, Daniel Bays, Kwame Bediako, Edith Blumhofer, Paul Freston, Elizabeth Isichei, Adrian Hastings, Richard Madsen, David Martin, Samuel Moffett, Lesslie Newbigin, Karla Poewe, Lamin Sanneh, and Brian Stanley.

But no one has written with greater wisdom about what it means for the Western Christian religion to become the global Christian religion than Andrew F. Walls, emeritus director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World at the University of Edinburgh. In *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Walls presents in nineteen essays the distillation of a lifetime's reflection on Christianity's twentieth-century global transformation.

The book grows from Walls' experience as a missionary educator in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, his extensive travel around the globe, and his extraordinarily multinational mix of graduate students. It is effortlessly learned, wondrously insightful, and sometimes even whimsically funny. When, for example, Walls arrived in Sierra Leone in the late 1950s, fresh from his theological training as a Scottish Presbyterian, there was no hesitation about setting the curriculum in ecclesiastical history: "The first year was for the early Church; the second, the Reformation; the third, Scotland—after all, what else is there?"

The process of finding out what else there was began almost immediately and yielded over time the reflections that make up this book. Walls' themes are both historical and theological. By tracing the current movement of Christianity from the post-Enlightenment North to the animistic South, Walls can show how much the twentieth century has resembled the second century, when Christianity moved out from its Judaic origins into the Hellenistic Mediterranean, and also its seventh- and eighth-century experience of northward migration from that Greco-Roman world into the Germanic regions of Europe.

By reflecting on how questions once considered trivial by semitic Christians (like what to think of Jesus' "natures") eventually had to be reckoned with,

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Walls suggests that believers in the West need to wrestle seriously with "new Christians" on such apparently tangential questions as whether long-dead ancestors may also be able to experience the joy of accepting the gospel. At the heart of the book, history and theology converge: Walls argues that precisely as Christianity is "translated" from culture to culture, it reveals its truest nature as a religion of the eternal Word "translated" into human flesh.

FIRST THINGS began with the editorial assertion that "for the sake of both religion and public life, religion must be given priority." What Andrew Walls' *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* brings to such an agenda is the indispensable reminder that Christian believers should be at home everywhere (because of the Incarnation) and nowhere (because of their longing for the return of Christ). A religion invigorated by that kind of tension is exactly the kind needed to nourish public life—both where Christianity has long been resident and in the many places around the globe where it has only recently found a home.

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Leszek Kolakowski
Modernity on Endless Trial
(1990)

Robert Royal

Everyone professes to dislike modernity, a characteristically modern stance. We all waver uneasily between what we know to be modernity's attractions and achievements on the one hand, and its profound, even radical, hollowness on the other. Whatever modernity is, it appears in perpetual transition to something else. Matthew Arnold first and best conceptualized our situation: "Wandering between two worlds, one dead / The other powerless to be born."

Good guidance in navigating this condition has been rare—too confident in one way, too tentative in another. Hence it is refreshing to turn again to Leszek Kolakowski's *Modernity on Endless Trial.* Why this powerful, poised, and beautifully written book did not receive more attention when it was first published is a mystery. Perhaps the neglect stemmed from its pacific intelligence, not easily reducible to any party program, political or religious. Kolakowski describes it as a collection of "semiphilosophical sermons" that explore currently insoluble dilemmas and argue for "moderation in consistency." But it is much more than that.

To reduce Kolakowski's multifaceted argument to a few simple points would be a travesty. But it would not be overly reductionist to say that, for him, both our uncertainty and our achievement point to why modern Western civilization is "Christian by birth." Kolakowski deplores the Enlightenment currents in the West that were too quick to believe that certain truths had been established beyond question. Because of that hubris, Stalinism, Nazism, Maoism, and "other fanatical sects" became inevitable. That many celebrated modern intellectuals fell prey to murderous fundamentalisms reflects both their arrogance towards normal people and their subsequent need to identify absolutely with the downtrodden to justify their own existence.

A different approach is to see the "uncertainty, incompleteness, and unestablished identity" of our world as a Christian contribution to our self-understanding that is to be accepted rather than overcome. Out of that unsettled state, the religious tradition at its best provides us with motivation to know and do better—but also with the recognition that, in this life, perfection is beyond our reach. That tension is uncomfortable because "Christianity constantly strives to strike a stable balance that cannot be achieved." But if we have learned anything in this bloody century, it is that there is no good alternative to that perpetual striving. We have seen every conceivable experiment at radical human freedom and social perfection, and the results are in: "The utopia of man's perfect autonomy and the hope of unlimited perfection may be the most efficient instruments of suicide ever to have been invented."

It is characteristic of Kolakowski that he does not regard a healthy uncertainty as a threat to all truths. In one essay, he asks: why do we need Kant? And his answer is that we have seen too many attempts at disguised moral suicide by Western intellectuals in the name of multiculturalism and other false humilities. Only a universal notion like Kant's belief in the sacred core of the individual, whatever we think of the philosophical underpinnings of his position, can prevent us from rationalizing away slavery and worse. Kolakowski is no friend to socialism, but he says that socialism could become viable only by accepting something like Kant's views.

It may be only a personal prejudice, but I believe the heart of Kolakowski's argument is the chapter

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"Can the Devil Be Saved?" The title bears a double meaning. Kolakowski thinks we need to remember that Satan is a real being in order to avoid taking evil lightly and falling into a wishy-washy Pelagianism. The danger of the orthodox view is that we may think we can do everything or nothing against evil. But more interestingly, Kolakowski speculates about whether the Devil can be saved in a theological sense, and, if so, what that would do to our sense of the world. If evil will ultimately be transformed, we run the risk of relativizing it even as it occurs. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* and Teilhard's *The Phenomenon of Man* are just two examples of the dangers that lie down this path.

But these dangers are not symmetrical. And that points towards an important feature of the world: "The fact that both affirmation and rejection of the concept of original sin have emerged as powerful destructive forces in our history is one of many that testify in favor of original sin. In other words, we face a peculiar situation in which the disastrous consequences of assenting to either of two incompatible theories confirm one of them and testify against its rival."

Yet this seemingly undeniable presence of original sin does not leave us entirely helpless. In fact, it provides two benefits. First, it rules out utopian impulses. But, paradoxically, it also spurs us to seek to overcome our errors and limitations, within an overall understanding that we shall not, ever, reconcile all things here on earth short of the Second Coming. Doubt and uncertainty are thus transformed into witnesses to, rather than sources of, imperfection.

The Devil, too, is a source of doubt. Where his existence is acknowledged and a full-bodied Christian response to it is deployed, however, the Devil's game changes. His very temptations remind us of the truth. Christianity has been recommended to us lately by revolutionaries as well as social reformers. Both groups may be right about the importance of faith for particular situations. But Christian thought is valuable long before we get to making such judgments precisely because it prevents us from assuming too little or too much about our condition. It is Good News both in good times and in bad.

All this seems to me to resemble the general direction of First Things over the last decade as well. May her editors and writers continue that work for many years to come.

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J. Gresham Machen
Christianity and Liberalism
(1923)

Walter Sundberg

The American church historian Sidney Ahlstrom once described J. Gresham Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* as "the chief theological ornament of American Fundamentalism." While fittingly complimentary, this assessment is unfairly restrictive. Machen never cared for the term "fundamentalism." He thought of himself as no more or no less than an orthodox Christian, confessional Presbyterian, and professor of New Testament, serving at Princeton Seminary until he resigned in 1929.

To be sure, Machen affirmed the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture. The Bible, he says, is a "true account" of divine revelation whose entire text is insured by the Holy Spirit. But this claim did not make Machen's theology different from the historic teaching of his church or the heritage of Princeton Seminary. Inerrancy is not the teaching upon which the Church stands or falls. "There are many," he wrote, "who believe that the Bible is right at the central point, in its account of the redeeming work of Christ, and yet believe that it contains many errors." While insisting on a biblical basis for Christianity, Machen did not believe, like the stereotypical fundamentalist, that all points of the Bible are of equal importance. How Machen makes his argument concerning what is and what is not of central importance is especially relevant, I think, to the readers of First Things because it speaks to the essence of theological reflection apart from the particulars of religious loyalty.

In *Christianity and Liberalism*, Machen separates himself doctrinally from a number of Christian groups. He says that premillenialists are wrong to try to map out the specifics of Christ's return. He rejects the Catholic allegiance to the Pope as the Vicar of Christ as well as the more general Anglican teaching that the office of bishop is a necessary mark of the Church. Against Wesley and Arminianism generally, Machen asserts that the human will is not free to choose salvation. Luther, he declares, was mistaken concerning the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Despite these serious doctrinal disagreements, Machen affirms that those with whom he disagrees are part of the Christian family. While separated over doctrine, they are one in affirming the central object of faith: the exclusive lordship of Jesus Christ.

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The denial of the object of faith is, according to Machen, the chief peril of theological liberalism. Liberalism treats historic doctrines, as well as confessional conflict, as the leftovers of a superseded supernaturalism. To be modern, says the liberal, is to interpret the world as a self-enclosed process in which there is no place for divine intervention. It is to understand the phenomenon of religion not as the encounter with an Other, but as the projection of human thought and desire. According to liberalism, the divine means nothing more than a vague feeling of an affirming "presence." This "presence" symbolizes, like some ancient demiurge, "the mighty world process itself" or "the highest thing that men know." The content of Scripture is reconceived as the symbolic quest for personhood that is to be judged according to how it advances "the healthy, harmonious, and joyous development of existing human faculties."

Against such a teaching, all Christians—indeed anyone who respects the fundamental nature of religion—must object. To transform religion into a form of human subjectivity is a deeply hostile act of intellectual hubris that seeks to destroy the authority of religion in public life. This is why Machen declares that "despite the . . . use of traditional phraseology, modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class."

One contemporary observer who agreed with this assessment was, of all people, Walter Lippmann. In *A Preface to Morals* (1929), one of the most highly regarded books of its day and still considered a classic interpretation of American culture, Lippmann, a secular critic and nonbeliever, took the side of Machen in the debate against theological liberalism. To separate the ideas and values of Christianity from external events goes against the fundamental nature of religious belief, Lippmann argued. "There is gone that deep, compulsive, organic faith in an external fact which is the essence of religion for all but that very small minority who can live with themselves in mystical communion or by the power of their understanding." Because Machen understands the essential connection between religion and historical externality, he "goes to the heart of the matter." Thus Lippmann judged *Christianity and Liberalism* one of the most important books of the decade following the Great War. Seventy years later, and for precisely the same reason, the book retains its importance.

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Harry V. Jaffa
Crisis of the House Divided
(1959)

Michael M. Uhlmann

Harry V. Jaffa has few peers as a student of the American Founding and none as the expositor of the Declaration of Independence and the statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln. He first established these credentials forty-one years ago with the publication of *Crisis of the House Divided*, which is, simply stated, the best commentary on American politics written in this century—indeed, since the death of Lincoln himself. Dismissed by the left as irredeemably unenlightened, and criticized by many on the right as suspiciously egalitarian, Jaffa has responded to both by arguing that the case for constitutional government cannot be understood or sustained without affirming the truths set forth in the preamble to the Declaration. The only alternative, he contends with eloquence and at times passionate intensity, is tyranny, whether of the few or the many.

The immediate purpose of *Crisis* was to refute diverse revisionists who asserted that Lincoln led the nation into an unnecessary civil war. Jaffa identified these scholars' unexamined historicist premises, by virtue of which they either refused to take seriously Lincoln's arguments concerning the Declaration's principles or rejected outright the truths it proclaimed. Jaffa countered with an elegant philosophical and historical exegesis of Lincoln's thought, beginning with the Lyceum Speech of 1838 and culminating in the celebrated debates with Stephen A. Douglas during the Illinois senatorial campaign of 1858.

A negotiated settlement of the slavery controversy, Jaffa argued, was no longer possible in the 1850s—not because Lincoln's rhetoric had removed the ground of compromise, but because proslavery advocates had begun to insist on the rightness of slavery, whence it would follow that Congress had not only the right but the duty to protect their interests. Chief Justice Taney's error in *Dred Scott*, Jaffa contended, lay not in recognizing that the Constitution had made certain practical compromises with slavery, which it certainly had, but in insisting that blacks possessed no rights that the white man was bound to respect. Once *that* proposition got itself embedded in constitutional understanding, the principles of the Declaration would become a nullity, marking the end of the American experiment in self-government. Lincoln merely articulated what

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was already implicit in the logic of the 1850s: the American people would have to affirm or deny the truth that *all* men are created equal, but they could not affirm that truth and at the same time agree with Douglas that majority will was the summum bonum of the Constitution.

By refocusing attention on the importance of natural rights in Lincoln's thought, Jaffa at once corrected the historical record and sought to reestablish the centrality of the Declaration in the American constitutional order. The Declaration, in Jaffa's view, is neither an abstract philosophical treatise nor a rhetorical set piece designed to mask or elevate baser motives. It is rather a living testament of political faith—one that in articulating the moral ground for government by consent also limited the powers of governments thereby created. It ratified not only the prescriptive rights of English subjects, but the sovereign right of all men everywhere to secure through government their divinely endowed rights. The Declaration was the summary document par excellence of the Founders' political teaching, but was hardly unique in its sentiment; its antecedents and echoes are to be found in numerous contemporaneous American charters, pamphlets, sermons, and legal commentaries. Redolent of biblical understanding as well as natural theology, the Declaration provides the ordering principle by which the American people became "We the People" of the Constitution.

In *Crisis* and in a series of books and articles written in the years since its publication, Jaffa has argued that the crisis of late-twentieth-century America, although lacking the immediate intensity of the slavery controversy, is morally analogous to it. Common to both is the rejection of natural rights. Douglas' statement that he didn't care whether slavery was voted up or down in the territories, but only whether the sense of the majority was free to work its will, is philosophically indistinguishable, says Jaffa, from arguments advanced today on both the right (e.g., by Robert Bork, William Rehnquist, and Antonin Scalia) and the left (e.g., by defenders of abortion). Jaffa rejects the jurisprudence of the so-called "living Constitution," but he understands, in ways that Bork, Rehnquist, and Scalia apparently do not, that simple majoritarianism is no cure for the vice of judicial usurpation.

In this, he stands as one with John Paul II, who has affirmed that the principles of the Declaration, rightly understood, embody the distilled wisdom of both reason and Revelation on the moral rationale for human government. Once positive law is separated from the moral argument of the Declaration, both men have said, one not only invites tyranny but severs the connection to the divine.

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Flannery O'Connor
The Collected Works

Robin Darling Young

The author of *The Violent Bear It Away* was a violent woman. Sitting quietly in front of a typewriter in faraway Milledgeville, Georgia, supplied with the eyesight of a bird of prey, Flannery O'Connor used her best instruments, insight and poetic expression, to force her characters right up to the edge of the artistic abyss. On the edge of the cliff, gesturing exaggeratedly to us, they are just one degree away from caricatures, often uttering words just this side of ridiculous, comic in their tragic devices and desires. They stalk their way through this visible world while the invisible one, the realm of grace, bears down on them with a mercy that often leaves them mortally wounded. O'Connor's stories and novels shocked her readers; her essays and letters show that this gave her no small pleasure. Mortal illnesses require strong medicine, and she was delighted to apply alcohol and the knife where her contemporaries' sickness was most malignant. Her intelligence told her that the sentimentally religious were often the sickest. If it weren't for the Church and its sacraments, she wrote, she would have become "the stinkingest logical positivist you ever saw."

If categories are invoked, O'Connor is readily identifiable as a Southern and Catholic writer. To consign authors to the categories of the regional and religious is usually to diminish them by convenience; fortunately O'Connor's writing defies diminution, because she wrote of the cities of God and man with a consciousness filled by something larger than merely a religious view, or a worldview, or a tradition. Her voice sounded a particular note, her eye saw and her hands crafted tales that told particular stories of the country to which she truly belonged—in the words of a contemporary author, John Casey, "that historical glacier the Church."

That is why it is not wholly correct to say, as the dustjacket of the otherwise excellent *Flannery*

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O'Connor: The Collected Works (Library of America, 1988) does, that O'Connor "in her short lifetime . . . became one of the most distinctive American writers of the twentieth century." O'Connor was an American writer only in a highly qualified way. No one with a passport from the *una sancta* can wholeheartedly embrace the American project of liberal commercialism, or why would O'Connor have made old Hazel Motes say, "Nobody with a good car needs to be justified"? The novel wherein Motes stalks (*Wise Blood*) takes him from his Church Without Christ, run out of his Essex automobile, to the self-inflicted blindness that gives him real sight. This theme—the paradox of faith that requires eyes to see what can't be seen with human eyes—took O'Connor from her first novel to her last short story, "Parker's Back," written shortly before she died in August 1964. (In that story, Parker's icon of the face of the God-man, tattooed on his back, drew the rage of his furiously, stupidly religious wife, who drove the idolater from the temple of her clean-swept house.)

O'Connor was often asked not only why her stories were not "nice," but why she did not write apologetical fiction in order to promote Catholic dogma directly. She wrote to a friend, "The best of [my religious readers] think: make it look desirable because it is desirable. And the rest of them think: make it look desirable so I won't look like a fool for holding it. In a really Christian culture of real believers this wouldn't come up." O'Connor was intrigued, but not deceived, by the religiosity of Southern Protestants and of Catholics who lived in the prewar South in a kind of diaspora. The South, she remarked, was not Christ-centered; it was "Christ-haunted." All her characters reveal the uneasy conscience of a post-Christian South contented by the consolations of religion and caste. (To Mrs. Turpin's warbling thanksgiving to Jesus for "making everything the way it is" in the short story "Revelation," O'Connor has a truculent young woman respond, "Go back to Hell where you came from, you old wart hog.")

The last thing O'Connor wanted to apply to the proud, unknowing desolation of American culture was a moralizing potion. To "A," a beloved friend whose later apostasy grieved her, she remarked, "All these moralists who condemn *Lolita* give me the creeps. Have you read *Lolita* yet? I go by the notion that a comic novel has its own criteria."

With such first principles, she could equally have been writing of her own work, comic in the sense that the last, happy word about the tragedy of human life comes from beyond it, as it does in "The Enduring Chill" to Asbury, delirious with undulant fever and staring at the pattern of a bird on the ceiling: "A last impossible protest escaped him. But the Holy Ghost, emblazoned in ice instead of fire, continued, implacable, to descend."

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William James
The Varieties of Religious Experience
(1902)

Carol Zaleski

Alfred North Whitehead put it best: William James is "that adorable genius." *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is not his best book—although there is matter for delight on every page—but it is our best book about religious experience, our best defense against skeptics, and our surest incitement to a genuine public dialogue about the significance of personal religious experience for our common life.

The *Varieties* is the text of James' Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion, delivered in 1901 and 1902 at the University of Edinburgh. Already suffering from the heart problem that would take his life in 1910, James was nearly done in by the effort of collecting the two hundred personal narratives that make the work a thick stew of "facts of experience" rather than a genteel consommé of philosophical speculation.

Partly an act of filial piety (James was conscious of having underestimated the spiritual impulses of his Swedenborgian father, Henry James, Sr.), the work was also a continuation of his study of unusual states of consciousness (in *The Principles of Psychology* and the Lowell Lectures on "Exceptional Mental States"), a sequel to the 1896 lecture on "The Will to Believe" in which James championed the legitimacy of religious belief against W. K. Clifford's naysaying, and an early manifesto for the pragmatism that is (for better or worse) the quintessentially American contribution to philosophy.

James begins the *Varieties* by clearing away intellectual obstacles. In his own day, it was fashionable to explain religious excitability as a form of autointoxication brought on by disordered digestion or nerves. (One thinks of Scrooge telling Marley, "There's more of gravy than of grave in you.") "Medical materialism," as James calls it, "finishes up St. Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging

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lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. . . . Carlyle's organ-tones of misery it accounts for by a gastro-duodenal catarrh." As the founder of the first psychology laboratory in America, an anatomist, and a sufferer from neurasthenia himself, James would be the last to deny the importance of physiological factors. But, humane Darwinist that he is, he is unwilling to discount mystical insights, whatever their source: "For aught we know to the contrary, 103 or 104 degrees Fahrenheit might be a much more favorable temperature for truths to germinate and sprout in than the more ordinary blood-heat of 97 or 98 degrees."

Today one is more likely to hear religious experience explained as the product of changing cultural fictions about gender, power, and selfhood; but the principle is the same. After one has counted up all the predisposing factors, James tells us, the real work of interpreting religious experience has just begun.

My students love the *Varieties* because they hear James making personal experience the arbiter of truth, rejecting institutions and dogmas, transforming religion into therapy, and indiscriminately validating everything from astrology to zazen. This is a common misreading of the *Varieties* for which James himself is partly to blame. He delineates his subject as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine," and ends his lectures by observing that "the axis of reality runs through the egotistic places." He delights in crackpot visionaries and defends their claims against more sober academic theologians, the "closet naturalists of the deity." He draws a convincing picture of conversion experiences in which grace suddenly supervenes upon despair (psychologically interpreted as a gift from our "extra-marginal" consciousness), thus making sin and redemption plausible to a generation that knows only addiction and recovery. He is so warmly sympathetic toward the religious testimonies he presents—from the relentlessly cheerful affirmations of the mind-cure movement to the metaphysical reveries of nitrous oxide mystics—that one can miss his criticisms.

But the criticisms are there. James indicts the "religion of healthy-mindedness"—grandpa to the New Age—for its shallowness in denying the reality of evil. He points out that the merely interruptive peak experience yields no spiritual benefit. Indeed, the whole of the *Varieties* is an exercise in the art of testing the spirits. Drawing upon Jonathan Edwards' *Treatise on Religious Affections*, and thus inheriting a tradition of discernment that goes back to Cassian and the desert fathers, James proposes evaluating religious experience by its "fruits for life," taking as our criteria "immediate luminousness, . . . philosophical reasonableness, and moral helpfulness." It was from the *Varieties* that Bill W., cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, learned not to put too much stock in his mystical "hot flash," but to emphasize instead the lifelong process of conversion within a fellowship.

The *Varieties*—with its individualism, privatism, and subjectivism—has been read as a catalogue of all that is wrong with our culture. But James' brand of individualism is very different from our own. It presupposes a more robust sense of intellectual and cultural community than most of us have experienced. James sees himself as a public philosopher whose mission in the *Varieties* is "to redeem religion from unwholesome privacy, and to give public status and universal right of way to its deliverances." He is a genius at friendship and at no-holds-barred argument, waging decade-long battles with Royce, Bradley, Pierce, and others without losing their goodwill and love. If we could hold such arguments today, then we would know that we were well on the way to a cure for our cultural disintegration and anomie.

James fails to appreciate fully ecclesial forms of faith, but at least he never definitively rules them out. His great contribution is to make religion a live option for those estranged from traditional faith. Never at home in the Christianity of his ancestors, James nonetheless manages in the *Varieties* to keep the door open for orthodoxy, for supernaturalism, for moral conviction, and for the kinds of religious engagement that make a real difference in the public square.

Carol Zaleski *teaches philosophy of religion at Smith College.*

John Paul II
Crossing the Threshold of Hope
(1994)

Philip Zaleski

There has never been a book like *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Popes teach, exhort, pray, serve; they issue encyclicals, bulls, and apostolic let-

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ters; they most emphatically don't write best-sellers. True, this century's pontiffs have not entirely ignored the halls of literature. Leo XIII wrote Latin verse celebrating both traditional Catholic motifs and modern technology. ("Sun-wrought with magic of the skies / The image fair before me lies," begins "Photography," a typical effort.) Pius XI penned *Climbs on Alpine Peaks*, an energetic account of his mountaineering adventures. ("We wished to avenge ourselves for our failure on Mont Blanc two years before.") John XXIII kept a diary published posthumously as *Journal of a Soul*. John Paul I left us *Illustrisimi*, an amusing collection of letters to Dickens, Pinocchio, and other famous figures.

And that, at least until a few decades ago, comprised the sum total of modern papal contributions to the world of books. The twentieth century's nine Popes, like most of their predecessors, kept their authorial ambitions under wraps. That is, until the advent of that literary cyclone known to the world as John Paul II.

It's difficult to determine just how many books this Pope has written. George Weigel's *Witness to Hope* lists twenty by Karol Wojtyla and thirty-six by John Paul II, but some of these volumes are collections of talks or letters and thus not authored books, properly speaking. What we can say for certain is that a torrent of writing that has included philosophy, theology, poetry, prayers, and plays, as well as encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, apostolic constitutions, and apostolic letters, continues to flow from his generous pen. From the standpoint of ecclesiastical history, the culmination of this vast literary output—carried on in the midst of staggering duties as priest, bishop, archbishop, cardinal, and finally Pope—may well be three of John Paul II's latest encyclicals: *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), *Evangelium Vitae* (1995), and *Fides et Ratio* (1998). From the standpoint of popular interest, however, the apex is surely *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (1994).

What is it about this book—cast in the form of written questions from Italian journalist Vittorio Messori and written answers by the Pope—that leads so many to treasure it? The reasons, as one might expect, are manifold. As I discovered when I used it last year in a college seminar for first-year students, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* is a splendid distillation of Catholic thought, the *Catechism* in miniature, the essential teachings of the world's largest religious body distilled into 244 elegant pages.

But catechetical summaries, while often valuable, are not unique. This book's originality lies elsewhere, in the Pope's willingness to roll up his sleeves and engage in deep, direct conversation with the modern world. He ranges through anthropology, cosmology, Christology, eschatology, psychology; communism, socialism, missionary activity, ecumenism; the thought of Levinas, Eliade, Marx, Buber, Rosenzweig. There is not a whiff of dilettantism here. The Pope has immersed himself in these thinkers (one remembers that he entered one of the 1978 Vatican conclaves with a book of Marxist ethics tucked under his arm), and what emerges is an invaluable effort to measure the last half-millennium, and our century in particular, against the eternal truths of God. Always the Pope subordinates politics to culture, culture to cult. The foundation and final measure remains God, whose action "passes through the heart of man and through the history of humanity." I don't know if John Paul II has read the mission statement of FIRST THINGS, which states that "the first meaning of FIRST THINGS is that, for the sake of both religion and public life, religion must be given priority," but I suspect that he would heartily approve.

The book crackles with a vitality that, twenty years into his papacy, one takes for granted with John Paul II. One finds this energy in the declaration that began his reign and begins this book: "Be not afraid!" One finds it in the exhilaration that courses through the text, the sense that totalitarianism and atheism are on the run and that the future brims with hope for Christians, indeed for all men and women of good will. One finds it in the Pope's bold overtures here toward the Church's traditional enemies, as when he speaks kindly of Islam even while some Muslims continue to persecute Christian missionaries. One finds it, too, in his willingness to speak his mind at the expense of controversy, for instance in his remarks about Buddhism's "negative soteriology" or in his insistence upon separating Jesus from all other religious figures: "If he were only a wise man like Socrates, if he were a 'prophet' like Muhammad, if he were 'enlightened' like Buddha, without any doubt he would not be what he is. He is *the one mediator between God and humanity*."

Above all, however, this book haunts its readers because at its center lies the mystery of the papacy. It is difficult to read it without the impression that when the Pope speaks, the other 264 occupants of the Holy See speak with him. One senses, to get right to the heart of the matter, the presence of Peter. The text radiates an authority quite different from that of an encyclical or other official teaching document: it has a power grounded not only in the office but in the man who fills it, in a life lived close

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to eternal verities. John Paul II speaks here of the blood of the martyrs as "the foundation of a new world, a new Europe, and a new civilization." It is not too much to say that his own long reign as Pope—in its own way a slow-motion martyrdom, an era of prodigious labor, great suffering, and glorious vitality—has also contributed, not least through this marvelous book, to laying the foundation for this new world and for its bounty, the civilization of love.

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Simon of Cyrene

We're already growing less creative
as we strive to lighten the trying, try
only to be blessed, and with our lives
we'll shy sightlessly from that light.
We're trying not to see our possibility—
if we were birds we'd not be flying—
the act of inertia before us
to carry the splinters of our human heart.
We're falling, the sunlight in our eyes,
earthly, we're trying to rise again,
realizing we've fewer things to decide.
We're tired of striving not to trust
our need to rest in the fine soft dirt,
and in this way we keep ourselves alive.

Neil Azevedo

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Report

What I Learned in China

Allen D. Hertzke

At least a hundred Chinese college students packed into the small auditorium of the American consulate in Shenyang, in the heart of old Manchuria, to hear my lecture on the civic role of churches in America. No interpreter was necessary, since most were English majors, and I felt at home enough to wander around the room, just as I do in my classes at the University of Oklahoma.

But my own students have never asked the kind of questions these did: "Do *you* believe in God?" "Are you a Christian?" "Where is God?" "How do you reconcile religion and science?" "Do you believe that humans evolved from monkeys?" "Can't people be moral without religion?" And my favorite: "If the Bible is the word of God, how come God didn't know about China?" Not only did this questioning force me to drop the professor's shield, but it epitomized the intense curiosity about religious faith among many Chinese today.

For three weeks in September of 1999 I traveled the length and breadth of the People's Republic of China, lecturing to scholars, students, journalists, and even government officials. Sponsored by the U.S. Information Service, the branch of our foreign service that "tells America's story" to the world, my lectures developed the theme that one cannot understand American politics without comprehending American religion.

Because the subject was religion and the U.S. State Department had just issued a report critical of religious persecution in China, these lectures often evolved into extended discussions, often debates, about the religious situation in China, the nature of a free civil society, the concept of religious freedom, and the meaning of faith in the modern world. Plentiful opportunities for quiet, one-on-one conversations also allowed me to hear personal accounts, whether of suffering during the Cultural Revolution and Tiananmen crackdown, or, with striking regularity, of the continuing struggles of religious believers in this one-party state. These encounters—some of the most poignant I have experienced as a scholar—opened a window into Chinese life and thought that I could not have anticipated. The following are some lessons I learned from this experience.

There is a tremendous spiritual ferment taking place in China, despite fifty years of official atheism. The chaos introduced by rapid market liberalization, not to mention the corruptions inherent in cadre capitalism, have produced a moral and intellectual vacuum. Is materialism enough? What is the basis for moral behavior in the marketplace? What is the purpose of a person's life? Upon what are the moral foundations of civil society to be built?

To this latter question, of course, Alexis de Tocqueville famously answered that spiritual beliefs and religious practice provided the "mores" that undergird free society in America. And in my lectures I explained how his thesis is being reaffirmed by a growing scholarship on American voluntarism, civil society, and social capital. American scholars are rediscovering religion, I noted.

What I discovered is that Chinese intellectuals are also groping for moral and religious clarity. I met scholars looking for ways to make Confucianism, traditionally hostile to commerce, more compatible with modern capitalism. I was asked whether, and how, religion might provide moral restraint in a market society. I was asked about how religion might produce "social capital"—social ties and trust among people—to help smooth the process of moderniza-

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tion. One perceptive student even asked if communism is a religion. Yes, I said, it is the god of the twentieth century that failed.

Yet the Communist Party clings to power, attempting to fill the vacuum with consumer goods and nationalist pride. The blossoming of religious movements, however—from Falun Gong (the banned meditation cult that blends elements of Buddhism, martial arts, and strict moral messages) to Islam and Christianity—suggests that the party's solution will not be adequate for China's restless people.

Indeed, I discovered curiosity about religion that went beyond mere academic interest, and I found myself explaining my own faith—or "witnessing" in the evangelical argot. One of my guides, a professed atheist, described how if he got depressed or anxious during college, he would go to the Catholic church to sit and meditate. There was something special about the place, he said. What was it? It speaks to our transcendent yearnings, I offered. Another guide, in a very sober moment, asked me what the essence of Christianity is. Love, I answered. God's love for us, as epitomized by offering His own son; our mandate to love others.

Then there was the young woman, obviously burdened by some trouble, who asked in the Q & A if religion could release a person from feelings of guilt. Taken aback by the elemental nature of the question, I answered that, yes, this was central to Judaism and Christianity and many other faiths, but I responded a bit too academically. After the lecture she shared more of her personal problems. Though not a practicing Christian herself, she wanted to talk to a Christian, someone outside her circle of family and friends. I told her she could be released from guilt, and I tried to connect her with someone who might help. I wondered if she found solace and, during Mass at a "patriotic" church later that day, I found myself praying for her.

But it was the Christian professors and students who really humbled me. At one lecture a student raised tough questions about the sincerity of many Americans' professed faith, given their moral behavior. I sized her up as a smart modern skeptic, like some of my own students. Then after the lecture I learned that she was an underground Christian, one of millions in China who worship in small fellowships against current Chinese law. A top student, she had been asked to join the Communist Party, which would advance her career. But it would also require a profession of atheism, which, in good conscience, she could not make. At another site I encountered another young woman who faced the very same dilemma. Not only would she refuse to lie, but she felt called to witness to her faith, which requires real courage in China today.

At best, people must choose between their faith and career advancement because party membership remains a crucial avenue for public employment. At worst, they face arrest and brutal treatment. In fact, just prior to my trip an elderly Catholic bishop and three priests, along with forty "house church" Protestant leaders, were arrested for "cult activities," the favored government term for anyone worshiping outside the officially sanctioned churches.

The above narrative hints at another lesson I learned, one concerning attitudes toward free civil society. The Chinese government, of course, fears an independent civil society. One scholar told me (without irony or apology) that fear stemmed from how religious critics, Christians in particular, provided opposition to the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. Or, as a party organ put it most graphically a few years ago, the regime must "strangle the baby while it is still in the manger" to avoid the fate of Warsaw Pact countries.

What surprised me was that many Chinese, including some sophisticated intellectuals, do not themselves fully appreciate, or accept, the concept of free civil society. Given China's five thousand year history of centralized, nondemocratic governance, this should not be a surprise. But I was fascinated about how attitudes of deference toward government exist alongside the capitalist modernization and opening now taking place.

This insight emerged in discussions of the religious situation in China. Though greater religious freedom exists today than during the Maoist era, religious persecution and discrimination are still common. With respect to Tibetan Buddhists, of course, the government has pursued a colonization policy that approaches cultural genocide. On general policy the Communist Party has attempted to channel religious practice into pro-government, or "patriotic" forms, making it illegal to worship anywhere but in a state-sanctioned church. Approved Christian worship, consequently, is restricted to the Protestant Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the Catholic Patriotic Association, which register only a fraction of China's fifty to seventy million Christians. Those who worship outside these approved churches, even in their homes, are subject to arrest, confiscation and destruction of property, exorbitant fines, and, credible reports suggest, torture.

This policy illustrates the contradictions of the regime: on the one hand it is eliminating state-run economic enterprises; on the other hand it continues to promote "state-run" churches, which cannot fulfill

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the spiritual hunger of the population and are often resented by "underground" Christians, who suffer and sacrifice for their faith. As Richard Madsen notes in a recent book, *China's Catholics* (University of California Press), many underground Catholics are bitter toward the patriotic churches, which they accuse of unfaithfulness in collaborating with the regime. Among Protestants, the underground population dwarfs the Three-Self churches, which are viewed as secularized or deeply compromised.

The existence of these approved churches, however, provides visible evidence of open religious practice. Some Western Christian groups have allied themselves—injudiciously, I think—with the official churches (liberal Maryknoll missionaries with the Catholic Patriotic churches; the Protestant National Council of Churches with the Three-Self Movement). Further complicating the picture is the fact that the enforcement of the religious law varies widely, with some unregistered Christians practicing openly in a few big cities while elsewhere they are harshly repressed.

Yet repeatedly I was told that there was full religious freedom in China. Some of these protestations, of course, were for public consumption, given police surveillance of university forums. And I sometimes heard a different story in private, especially among those Christians whose personal experience imparted special insight into the nature of the regime. But I had numerous conversations, both public and private, which convinced me that many educated Chinese believe what they have been told by the government. They would refer me to Chinese law, which recognizes five official religions. They would point to the functioning Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim places of worship in their cities. When I would mention the arrests of house church Christians and Tibetan Buddhists, they would parrot the party's line that unregistered churches are dangerous cults, or that they bilk peasants out of their money, or are involved in other illegal activities.

Some of these exchanges had an Orwellian quality, especially those with party apparatchiks and the less sophisticated students. To explain U.S. concern about the religious situation in China, I would sometimes show photographs of house church Christians arrested by the government. A common response was, so why don't they register? What's the big deal? Well, I responded, the Religious Affairs Bureau is headed by an atheist, and the officially sanctioned seminaries and ministers are not free to preach the pure gospel. But why do they want to worship in their houses anyway—isn't it more pious in a church? They worship in houses, I replied, because the government won't let them worship in unregistered church buildings. Well, they must have been engaged in illegal activities, that's why they were arrested. Yes, I would say, but their only illegal activity was refusing to register. They still broke the law.

Wonderfully revealing also were questions about American religion. What does the American government do about religious groups that engage in antigovernment activities? How does the American government protect people from cults? How does the American government deal with bad religions? Many found my laissez faire answers unsatisfactory, and some even argued that China had a better way because it protected people from bad religions. My standard response, which occasionally elicited chuckles, was that as a typical American I apparently trusted my government a lot less than they trusted theirs to make the judgment about what is good or bad religion.

An excellent illustration of this was the response to the crackdown on Falun Gong, which involved the arrest of thousands, the burning of books, and a propaganda blitz of immense proportions. China has a long history of secret societies that undermined rulers, so the Communist response was perhaps understandable, if unfortunate. But almost everyone I talked with in China viewed the government ban as appropriate. One of my interpreters, for example, told how a teacher she knew became involved in Falun Gong and would scare the students by holding a meditation pose in the classroom for half an hour. Others echoed the government's charge that some Falun Gong members died because they refused medical treatment or jumped off buildings in moments of euphoria.

My own response to queries about "bad religion" was that free civil society can be messy. The law can deal with criminal activities, but not beliefs or membership in organizations. Thus we in the United States rely on moral suasion, publicity, and people's ultimate good sense to deal with problematic groups, rather than entrust government with too much power. To many Chinese, these softer remedies did not seem as satisfying as swift and sure government action.

Another lesson I brought home concerns American diplomatic efforts to raise the issue of religious persecution in China. Today in China access to information is largely limited to the state-run press. And it reports that the Dalai Lama is a political hack, that China rescued Tibet from feudalism, that the Falun Gong is a dangerous cult, and that good Chinese Christians belong to patriotic church-

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es. One of my interpreters, in fact, had trouble translating "house church" because she had never heard of the term. If the U.S. government does not raise the problem of religious persecution in China, therefore, who will?

Ironically, we in open societies have better access to certain kinds of information on the religious situation in China than most Chinese. The arrest of Zhang Rongliang, for example, leader of the major unregistered Protestant movement in Henan, was reported widely in Christian circles in the U.S., but not in China. Thus, when I used as a lecture prop his photograph from a Focus on the Family publication, people in the audience invariably wanted to read the story, which was fresh news to them. If American officials continue to raise these issues, at least the Chinese authorities know someone is watching what they do.

What most Chinese know of the United States, unfortunately, is also largely what the state-run press reports. From city to city, for example, I kept getting questions about religion and mass suicides. What was going on? Finally I was told by a U.S. consulate official that in the wake of Beijing's banning of Falun Gong, the party organs blitzed the airwaves with footage of Jonestown, Heaven's Gate, and Waco, to show how cults induce suicides, thus justifying the government's crackdown. In correcting their impression that mass suicide was a common trait of American religion, I tried to indicate how precious religious freedom is to Americans, and why American leaders raise the issue with Chinese officials.

Foreign policy realists, of course, may chafe at the prospect of religion "muddying" America's international posture. But religious freedom is central to the protection of human rights and democratic evolution around the world; thus pressing the issue would seem to be in our national interest. Moreover, as mandated by the International Religious Freedom Act, which Congress passed unanimously in 1998, the promotion of religious freedom as a universal human right is now a "basic aim" of American foreign policy. And one of the legislation's first fruits was a hard-hitting report on China's suppression of religion, which will be followed by recommendations from an independent commission for specific presidential action.

Policy makers, to be sure, will differ on what blend of trade, engagement, and sanctions might promote greater religious freedom in China. My conversations with believers, at least, suggested that independent religious communities constitute a signal hope for a genuine civil society in China. Echoing Vaclav Havel's idea that totalitarian regimes are undermined when people "live in the truth," one Chinese scholar told me that Christians in China uniquely appreciate civil society. "There is no tangible benefit to becoming a Christian," he said, "so once they make that crossover they see the truth, and do not believe the propaganda of the regime." Perhaps this is one reason why dissident Wei Jingsheng believes that creating greater space for religious freedom may be the most efficacious way to promote human rights more generally.

The final lesson I brought home from China is that the world is watching us. As the globe's indispensable nation and superpower, the United States symbolizes democratic governance, human rights, and free civil society. Thus many people abroad are keenly interested in how our experiment fares, and they pay attention to signs of decadence and disorder in our culture. From Chinese audiences I heard about school shootings, family breakdown, and President Clinton's misbehavior. And when the American government messes up, as it did at Waco, that has greater implications than we imagine. In discussions about how the United States allows freedom for unpopular faiths and cults, I often heard the refrain, "What about Waco?" Good question. All I could say was that most Americans now see that episode as a terrible blunder, and that it is an exception to our general approach.

Fortunately, we look pretty good to those who have traveled to the United States. Visitors are struck by the religious life of Americans, by their hospitality, and by their civic concern. Typical was a prominent journalist, who had studied for a year in the U.S., who said that what surprised him about Americans is their honesty and trust. He mentioned how a clerk at a hardware store will take the word of a customer about how many of an item he has, and was impressed to see kids and well-dressed men and women picking up trash on a highway. It took me a moment to realize he was referring to adopt-a-highway programs so common among civic and church groups. Such simple things, I thought, but they illustrated a lot to this editor of a prominent Chinese newspaper.

Because of cultural exchanges, and perhaps because of American protests against religious repression in China, some elites in China have concluded that they must understand American religion if they are to understand the United States. A scholar at one of the top Chinese social science institutes, I learned to my surprise, has been asked to write a book on American religion for Chinese diplomats and leaders traveling to the U.S. Apparently, officials in high party circles concluded that religion is impor-

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tant enough in America to warrant serious study.

I wish some in our own intellectual class were as aware. I talked with one Chinese professor who had just completed a Fulbright year of study in the U.S. He had wanted to study the influence of religion on American foreign policy, but when he was put into contact with professors at some of America's elite universities, they dismissed the idea. There was no story to tell, he was told; "we have separation of church and state" and therefore religion has no influence on foreign policy. After my talk on how the "sleeping giant" of American religion was roused during the lobbying campaign for the International Religious Freedom Act, he said he felt vindicated, if still disappointed.

This perceptive scholar, who was convinced that the religious culture of America might influence its foreign policy, also offered an appropriate epitaph for my lectureship in China. With simplicity and wisdom, he captured the point, not only of my lectures, but my life's scholarship: "Without religion there is no America." FT

Joseph of Arimathea

To be the first to hold him in my arms,
to linger on him while he has to rest,
to repair wounds and his torn skin,
to confirm his shattered body into place,
to hear a stillness haunt and leave his lips,
to see for certain that he finally sleeps,
to feel alone and everything I've felt,
to please him as I please and not be seen,
to bury evidence of his defeat,
to hide in tombs in these fresh hours,
to free myself from thoughts I have to shun,
to crave a quiet that will devour love,
to understand why only I believe,
to cover all the damage I have done.

Nicodemus

As I see the body, I believe its parts,
as I prepare its presence and final place
praying against the rigidity, as I
confirm each cut and document his death.
I anoint with balm and Jewish rite.
How can these things be, our need
displayed among his torso, head, and palms?
I'm healing when it's too late to forgive,
cowering in psalms I've tried to live,
as the cold harrows the skin, the linen
bloodless and dry and beautifully stitched.
In midnight's pattern I've come to believe
in how to keep his image fresh and here
while we suffer. While he needs to sleep.

Neil Azevedo

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Books In Review

Victory by Default?

Political Will and Personal Belief: The Decline and Fall of Soviet Communism. By Paul Hollander. *Yale University Press. 351 pp. $35.*

***Reviewed by* Andrew J. Bacevich**

Throughout the Cold War, Sovietologists contended fiercely with one another over the nature of Communist regimes. Engrossed in that pursuit, they missed altogether the one development that really mattered. Taking for granted the permanence of the Soviet Empire, virtually none of them perceived its fragility or anticipated its abrupt demise.

In the decade since, these experts have turned with comparable single-mindedness to analyzing their failure, a project that has given rise to new wrangling, this time over competing explanations for the collapse of communism. This is a worthy enterprise. Lest that enterprise descend into little more than an intramural quarrel, however—old adversaries arguing amongst themselves about who got what wrong—participants should be mindful of the insularity that led to their collective embarrassment in 1989. If the effort to explain the disintegration of the Soviet Union proceeds with the same blinkered dogmatism, it will prove sterile. Pursued with broad-mindedness and even a measure of empathy, that effort just might yield insights into political legitimacy and political stability from which democracy itself may benefit.

However much it is the subject of contention in the groves of academe, in the typical American household the collapse of communism does not qualify as a hot topic. When it comes to explaining who and what routed the Communists, Joe Six-Pack, it seems fair to say, requires no instruction. The story, as he sees it, is a simple one: the Good Guys prevailed. They did so with assertiveness backed by military power. If credit for bringing the Evil Empire to its knees belongs to any particular individual, that credit goes to Ronald Reagan, or to Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, or to Reagan and John Paul II. In short, the Soviet Union succumbed to external pressures, mounted above all by a resurgent United States that by the 1980s had recovered its self-confidence after a decade or more of confusion and doubt.

For most Americans, this interpretation works on two levels. It explains the outcome of the Cold War in a way that is both gratifying and uncomplicated: as the contest entered the late rounds, the Soviet Union, like an exhausted and overmatched boxer, refused to answer the bell. At the same time, it fits with the inclination, dear to Americans in this century, to view history as a triumphal march, with the United States leading humanity, however fitfully, onward to a better life.

In *Political Will and Personal Belief*, Paul Hollander, an eminent sociologist who teaches at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, advances an alternative explanation for why the Soviet Union and its satellites foundered. In this account, Reagan scarcely figures. Indeed, the entire world beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Empire scarcely figures. According to Hollander, the cause of collapse was internal, stemming directly from a loss of conviction, not only in the Kremlin, but in other centers of Communist power: Prague, Warsaw, and East Berlin.

The Soviet order unraveled not due to pressure from the West but because those who benefited most from that order—the privileged members of the *nomenklatura*—no longer believed in the enterprise. Unable beyond a certain point to ignore the disparity between the declared ideals of the Revolution and the drab, suffocating (and under Stalin, terrifying) reality of "real existing socialism," disillusioned members of the political elite gave up on communism. Although the distribution of boodle—dachas, chauffeured limousines, access to special stores, opportunities for travel abroad—made it possible for a time to sustain the appearance of a functioning system, at the core there existed only rot: corruption, mendacity, and rank cynicism. After Stalin's death, even ruthlessness proved to be in short supply: none of the tyrant's successors possessed anything like his remorseless determination to eliminate any and all threats to his hold on power. In this view, the gradual, but progressive and irreversible, dissolution of the Soviet Empire began not in the 1980s with Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms but in 1956 with Nikita Khrushchev's acknowledgment of Stalin's crimes.

To support this thesis, Hollander profiles nearly two dozen members of the Communist elite, some from the Soviet Union itself, others from Eastern Europe. His subjects include familiar figures such as Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze as well as other, more obscure officials—not only politicians, but also military officers, intelligence operatives, and diplomats. They include defectors, dissidents, reformers, and functionaries who insistently absolve themselves of all responsibility for any "errors" committed on the regime's behalf.

As portrayed by Hollander, they are, with certain honorable exceptions, a sorry lot: party hacks who send subordinates to do the dirty work while themselves enjoying a

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pampered existence; opportunists whose discovery of the regime's shortcomings somehow coincides with their own career disappointments; die-hard loyalists who only at the very end admit to certain "imperfections" in the system they had served.

Having waded through their self-serving memoirs, and having subjected himself in interviews to their flimsy excuses, Hollander may be forgiven for the evident distaste that he feels for his subjects. And yet, there is something unnervingly familiar about the privileged elite that he describes and the political milieu in which they flourished.

CENTRAL TO HOLLANDER'S explanation of the Soviet Empire's apparent durability and its sudden collapse is the concept of "cognitive dissonance." Even as the contradictions grew between the Party's description of the world and what was plain for everyone to see, members of the Communist elite refused to think through the implications. The myths of the Revolution (that communism would liberate the masses from oppression) and of the Great Patriotic War (that the USSR had saved the world from fascism) created a huge barrier against understanding—a barrier that few prior to the 1980s possessed the intellectual or moral courage to scale. As even General Petro Grigorienko, one of the exceptions, admitted, "I saw many things but I was unable to generalize from what I had seen."

Only when the risks of generalizing diminished—in large part due to *glasnost*—did members of the *nomenklatura* acknowledge (in ever increasing numbers) that they had been living a lie that was becoming unsustainable. With that, the entire system crumpled. "It is agonizingly difficult to acknowledge that you have worshiped the wrong god," Schevardnadze reflected. Once admit its fraudulence, however, and

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it is surprisingly easy to topple that false god from its pedestal. What seems solid, strong, and durable turns out to be hollow and flimsy.

One need waste no sympathy on these chastened members of communism's privileged class on account of their diminished status. All humanity is better off for the demise of the political order from which they benefited at the expense of their own fellow citizens.

And yet, whether intentionally or not, Hollander's rendering of a political class that exists chiefly to perpetuate its own prerogatives and its hold on power seems very familiar. For example, Hollander indicts Communist functionaries for manipulating such "indisputably laudable goals as full employment, better childcare, and lower crime rates" to rationalize their "possession of power at virtually any cost"—about as succinct a description of politics in the Age of Clinton as one could conceive.

By almost any other measure, the United States of the present-day—swaggering, affluent, pressing to widen further the claims and prerogatives of "freedom"—bears scant resemblance to the Soviet Union of the 1980s. Yet it is not an indulgence of the great error of "moral equivalency" to suggest that the scandalous state of our national politics may constitute an exception to that statement. Disgusted with sleaze and dissembling—the pandering to money interests, sacrifice of principle, and inability even to define the common good—Americans are choosing in increasing numbers to opt out. Many no longer even bother to vote. The result is to forfeit the governance of the country to America's own class of apparatchiks, who, not wholly unlike the Soviet officials of former times, pretend to cherish the old myths while managing to do well even when they are not doing much good. As a basis for long-term political legitimacy, Paul Hollander would seem to suggest, such an arrangement may well be fraught with risk.

Culture and Its Discontents

Culture: the Anthropologists' Account. By Adam Kuper. *Harvard University Press. 299 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by* J. L. A. Garcia**

Culture is everywhere: moral (read: cultural) relativism; social (read: cultural) construction; multiculturalism; cultural identity, cultural diversity, and cultural imperialism; Cultural Studies and culture wars; high culture, mass culture, and "subaltern" culture; the cultures of instant gratification, of poverty, of death, and (aspirationally at least) of life. And so on. One helpful way of understanding postmodernism is that it makes cultures—always in the plural—do the work previously thought to belong to biology, human nature, or reason: ordering experience, validating ideas, grounding value, rendering human life intelligible and meaningful.

Now Adam Kuper, a South African-born and British-educated anthropologist, seeks to offer a map through the thicket of claims about culture and some narrative of how they came to ensnare us. Though "cultural studies" now chiefly occupy the humanities, Kuper recognizes both that social scientists are seen as the real experts on culture and that much current discussion about culture somehow traces back to their work.

Kuper begins his story engagingly, working primarily from mid-twentieth-century interpretations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources. As he tells it, French Enlightenment thinkers identified "culture" with the process of civilizing humanity, liberating it from religion through greater reliance on universal (and secular) reason. German Romantics rebelled against this, from

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the desire not so much to preserve religion as to maintain the local folk customs and habits of feelings, with which they identified culture, as against the universalizing and dispassionate reason the French *philosophes* had found unproblematic. British humanists from Coleridge through Eliot rightly wanted to get beyond the Germans' sharp dichotomy, fearing it would turn the advocacy of culture into a cult of unreason.

They muddied the waters, however, using "culture" as a name for the vague alternative they posited to bourgeois liberalism. They envisioned culture as the antidote to a world of individuals motivated only by profits, where reason is reduced to commercial and technological instrumentalism, and where a complacent agnosticism allows thought to float at the surface of things, untroubled by what may lie at the depths of the human heart or the larger reality that surrounds us. Of course, it is doubtful any one concept could capture all these thinkers wanted. For them, cultures—now sometimes in the plural—tended to become both valuable and strictly equal in value, universal but also somehow reserved to the social elite.

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THE SOCIOLOGIST Talcott Parsons conceived social science as a general theory of human action, and wanted to define culture by its place within that theory. He made culture anthropology's special province (to the consternation of some physical anthropologists), but assigned the larger "social system" to sociology and the individual mind to psychology. In the second half of this century American anthropologists broke this boundary, demanding a larger, more central role for culture—and, therein, for themselves. (My experimental undergraduate college featured a social sciences "division," minus academic departments, under Margaret Mead's titular direction and shaped by her vision that all the social sciences at least be modeled on and guided by anthropology, and perhaps become versions of it. Once I saw how this worked, I switched my major.)

Though Kuper doesn't notice, this breakdown was inevitable. For Parsons' desired division of labor faced another, already in place, that assigned sociologists to study *us*, while anthropologists were to study *them*, that is, distant, exotic, primitive peoples. Layering Parsons' division onto this one would leave no one to study our own culture. As change

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swept through postwar Western customs, such a gap would have been intolerable.

Increasingly, some anthropologists (and their intellectual allies in social sciences and humanities) insisted that Parsons' "social system," as well as the working of the individual's mind and even the body, were all influenced, shaped, and finally "constructed" by culture—indeed, differently constructed by different cultures. Clifford Geertz, David Schneider, and Marshall Sahlins all argued for this wider role for culture, often with murky reasoning that Kuper effectively criticizes.

Geertz has had the widest influence, especially outside social science, and Kuper's chapter on him, the best in the book, will be of the widest interest. Kuper shows that Geertz became increasingly influenced by contemporary philosophy and other writings in the humanities, and that the Geertzians' stronger claims—e.g., that actions, because symbolic, are "texts" and that texts have meaning without reference to anything beyond themselves—are largely unsupported by the field work that established Geertz's early professional reputation. (Kuper does credit Geertz, however, with returning religion to the cultural center from which other twentieth-century anthropologists had banished it. Geertz came to see culture as consisting in systems of often ritualized meaning. In that context, it became increasingly important to study religion—the seat of ritual—and the social elites who could best interpret religious rituals and meaning systems.)

Geertz claimed that actions are systems of meaning, and therefore irreducibly cultural. Schneider tried to do the same for sex, arguing that sex "expresses" love in a way that is symbolically meaningful and therefore irreducibly cultural. Such contentions are unscientific, of course—based more in (unconvincing) philosophical argument than anthropological data.

Kuper's most important point here is a simple and familiar, yet devastating, one: if all our concepts, practices, and ways of thought are socially constructed, merely local, and historically specific, then so too must be the concept of culture. But if it is, then the anthropologists' dogmas—for example, that all peoples have cultures, that all cultures are equal, that culture shapes all else—are themselves only local beliefs, historically contingent, and with no

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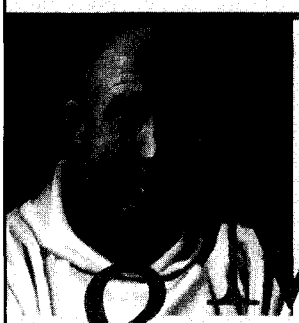

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legitimacy beyond what we assign them. In the end, the anthropologists' account leaves us without reason to reject ethnic intolerance. Indeed, it deprives us of any alternative to ethnocentrism. Kuper is keenly aware that in his native land advocates of apartheid were wont to defend the practice as part of local culture and thereby immune from criticism by outsiders.

Kuper's complaint is that rather than *explaining* culture, anthropologists today simply *use* it to explain other things. These are two distinct projects (though wholly compatible with each other), yet recent work neglects the former task. Kuper is a social scientist who sees culture as folkways, customs, and languages, and wants to explain them. He is troubled not just that this work is neglected, but that the tendency to regard culture as rock-bottom, all-inclusive, and omni-explanatory—and as sealed off from outsiders' interpretation—makes doing the work impossible.

KUPER'S FRUSTRATION is understandable, but we need to go deeper. Culture used to be tied to civilization, that is, to an indispensably normative and teleological process of cultivating the self for its improvement. Herder adapted the term "Kultur" from Cicero's farm metaphor: a culture can be seen as an interpersonal environment that cultivates and nourishes the people who comprise it. A genuine culture does this by instructing people about where they came from, where they are going, in what surroundings they exist, and how they are to live. That is why culture is said to order experience and give meaning to life, and why it is closely tied to *cultus*, to religion. But if culture teaches about man, and man is fundamentally the same everywhere, then what different cultures teach may be evaluated as correct or incorrect, reasonable or unreasonable. As we move beyond the self-destruction of the anthropologists' account of culture, I think we do well to recapture something from this earlier sense of the term.

This will have consequences. Societies and their cultures cannot "construct" people, sexes, or groups, for people are the ones who do the constructing. And they must already exist, and have sexes, and belong to groups, to do it. Nor can culture be the source of all values and ends; for culture is defined according to the preexistent end of improving humanity, and improvement is always measured relative to some preexistent standard of value. Probably we can continue to talk of culture in the plural, but maybe not: it depends on the question (which is only partially empirical) of whether more than one kind of interpersonal environment genuinely cultivates and nourishes human beings.

This understanding of culture should help us see through the claims of cultural relativism and social construction by today's "cultural" left. Social conservatives (those on the "cultural" right) will also have to reform their linguistic practice. They too have dabbled in culture-talk, decrying, as noted above, what they deem the cultures of unbelief, of death, of poverty, and so on. Yet, social customs so negative and destructive have no right to be called "culture" at all, since they do nothing to uplift people or help them thrive. Perhaps reconceiving culture as that which improves our lives, which uplifts and ennobles us, will enable us to see again the special value of so-called "high culture," to see it once more simply as real culture, culture at its most cultivating.

The initial value of Kuper's work is negative (deconstructive, if you will). It punctures contemporary thinking about culture, undermining its supposed sources in social science. Its deeper significance may be to help open the door to the reconstructive

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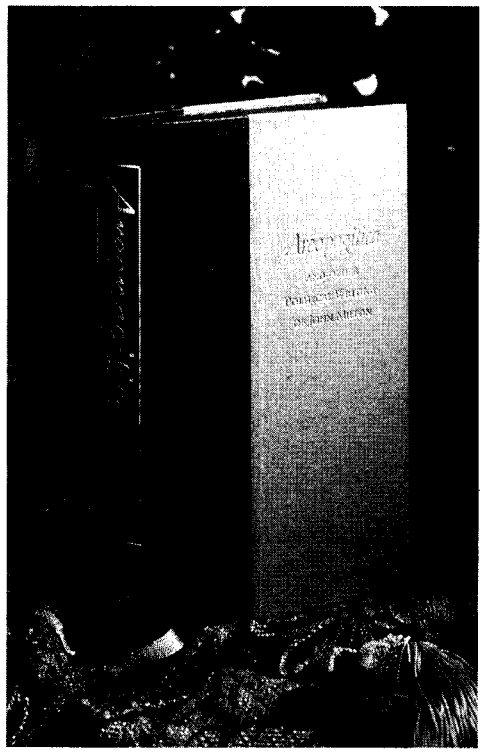

John Milton (1608–1674) was the author also of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* and served as Latin secretary to Oliver Cromwell during the Commonwealth.

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project of reconceptualizing culture along normative and teleological lines, with *cultus*, religion, seen again as its heart. As Paul Tillich says in the third volume of his *Systematic Theology*, "Religion is the substance of culture and culture is the form of religion."

Between Father and Daughter

GALILEO'S DAUGHTER: A HISTORICAL MEMOIR OF SCIENCE, FAITH, AND LOVE. By DAVA SOBEL. *Walker and Company. 432 pp. $27.*

***Reviewed by* Elizabeth Powers**

THE FIRST TWO TERMS of Dava Sobel's subtitle—science and faith—inevitably suggest conflicts to us moderns. Yet, for the preeminent scientists of the seventeenth century—Galileo, Pascal, Descartes, Newton, men of deep faith all—there seems not to have been any. In fact it was Galileo's conviction that the truths of nature were revealed by God that drove him to establish the sun-centered theory of the universe despite fierce opposition from influential quarters. Of course, Galileo's detractors, including religious figures such as Pope Urban VIII, were also deeply learned, as this gracefully written book makes clear. The conflict was not between darkness and light; Galileo's opponents understood perfectly well what he was saying. What was at stake, in Dava Sobel's words, was "the most stunning reversal in perception ever to have jarred intelligent thought: We are not the center of the universe. The immobility of our world is an illusion. We spin. We speed through space. We circle the Sun. We live on a wandering star."

All these issues and personalities have been laid out in other works devoted to Galileo. Yet as in her immensely popular *Longitude*, a gripping account of eighteenth-century scientific invention in England, Sobel brings a fresh angle to her subject that makes it come alive for the ordinary reader. Here she interweaves into a story of Galileo's public life excerpts from the 124 surviving letters from his daughter. These letters date from precisely the period, 1623 to 1633, during which Galileo

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published his *Dialogue on Two Chief World Systems* and found himself, at seventy years of age, drawn before the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Rome to defend himself against the charge of heresy. His daughter, Suor Maria Celeste, was a deeply religious young woman who entered the Poor Clares convent at age thirteen and remained cloistered the rest of her life. Yet after a fashion, her letters provide an earthly counterpoint to her father's search of the heavens. Galileo's side of the correspondence with his daughter was probably destroyed by the mother abbess after Maria Celeste's death for fear of harboring the writings of a "vehemently suspected heretic."

The letters are about love—the third term of Sobel's subtitle, and again we must escape modern prejudices. This is not love across a crowded room, on some enchanted evening, the inspiration of a moment. The love concerns the most abiding bonds of affection between a father and a daughter. Maria Celeste was her father's confidant and most steadfast supporter—she chose her name, Sobel tells us, as a gesture acknowledging her father's fascination with the heavens. Her letters testify to her absolute devotion to him and her conviction that his work was important and provided evidence of God's will.

While the Tuscan ambassador in Rome described Galileo as "more dead than alive" after his questioning by the Holy Office, she advised her father in the same month of April 1633: "The only thing for you to do now is to guard your good spirits, taking care not to jeopardize your health with excessive worry, but to direct your thoughts and hopes to God, Who, like a tender, loving father, never abandons those who confide in Him and appeal to Him for help in time of need." After reading the Holy Office's sentence, she took upon herself one of her father's penances, the recitation of the seven pentitential psalms on her knees once a week for three years.

Baptized Virginia at her birth in 1600, she was the eldest of three children of Galileo by Marina Gamba of Venice. According to Sobel, it was the custom of scholars in the period not to marry; and though Galileo acknowledged his children, Marina's lineage seems to have ruled out marriage to his mistress. Once Galileo settled in Florence as "Philosopher and Mathematician" to the dukes of Tuscany, the demographics (there were more women than men in Flo-

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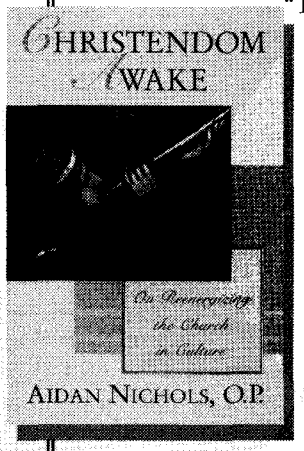
On Reenergizing the Church in Culture

AIDAN NICHOLS, O.P.



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rence) and his daughters' illegitimacy seem to have ruled out marriages commensurate with the family's status. Already by 1611, Galileo had begun accumulating enemies among academics because of his anti-Aristotelian views. It was this animus, Sobel writes, that led Galileo to settle his two daughters in a convent, "a safer environment than he could provide for them."

The attention to detail that made *Longitude* so striking is here supplied not by Sobel but by Maria Celeste, who writes of the minutiae of convent life: how she prepared medicines from rosemary leaves for her father in the convent apothecary; or how she took care of domestic work as though she were living at home with him—sewing table linens for his frequent journeys or bleaching the white collars that can be seen gracing his face in portraits. There is frequent mention of the broad beans, orange trees, grapes, pears, and other products of Galileo's garden, over all of which she managed to keep watch from behind convent walls.

Indeed, food and the desire for a modicum of earthly comfort—a cell of one's own, as it were—recur constantly in these letters. The gratitude for melons sent, the presentation of baked pears for her father on a feast day underline the exiguousness of life in the convent. Indeed, during the plague that ravaged Italy during these years, the nuns in the convent survived without a single casualty—there was apparently not enough grain in their stores to entice the disease-bearing rats.

Suor Arcangela, Maria Celeste's younger sister in the convent, apparently did not acquiesce in her poverty so readily. Maria Celeste writes that her sister's eccentric nature is so very different from her own that "it pays for me to acquiesce to her in many things, in order to be able to live in the kind of peace and unity befitting the intense love we bear each other." Twentieth-century readers may find such sentiments unworthy, testimony only to the obligations of poverty and obedience.

Yet Galileo also had strong bonds of affection among those who were not poor or subservient—his friends and defenders had wealth and power to lose by coming to his defense. Galileo resided for a time with Archbishop Ascanio Piccolomini of Siena; the archbishop, rather than holding him prisoner as a confessed heretic, instead provided the stimulus for Galileo's last work, *Two New Sciences*. Galileo could also count among his allies his patron, Ferdinando II, Grand Duke of Tuscany, and Francesco Cardinal Barberini, a favorite nephew of Pope Urban whom Galileo had guided through his doctoral studies at Pisa. Barberini tried to protect his teacher at first, and ultimately was one of three (out of ten) inquisitors who did not sign the edict against him. Another pupil, Vincenzio Viviani, even succeeded in having his master's papers published, without the forbidden *Dialogue*, in 1656.

The story Sobel tells caused me to ponder whether such love can exist absent a faith in the immutability of the heavens. In calling this portrait of Galileo and his daughter an "historical memoir," Sobel suggests the erosion that has occurred when love has no stronger grounding than the corrupt sublunary spheres.

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The Contradictions of Nazi Medicine

THE DEATH OF MEDICINE IN NAZI GERMANY: DERMATOLOGY AND DERMATOPATHOLOGY UNDER THE SWASTIKA. By WOLFGANG WEYERS, M.D. *Madison Books. 472 pp. $18.95.*

THE NAZI WAR ON CANCER. By ROBERT N. PROCTOR. *Princeton University Press. 365 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by* Wesley J. Smith**

FOR LOVERS OF HISTORY and those interested in preserving cultural morality and virtue, the Nazi era is a mine that never runs out. Evil has rarely been so open, notorious, corrupting, and successful: tens of millions slaughtered in war, millions more killed in organized genocide; the ethical practice of medicine subverted to the point where German doctors willingly exploited and murdered their weakest and most vulnerable patients; a once proud and civilized nation reduced to the habits of a rabid dog.

Even now, more than fifty years after the horror, we find ourselves compelled to sift repeatedly through the ashes, to seek, to question, to inquire, to learn and relearn the lessons necessary to ensure that "Never again!" remains our enduring commitment.

In this regard, vigilance is acutely necessary in the medical sphere. As in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, in America today Hippocratic values and the sanctity of life ethic are under attack. A cadre of elite academics, moral philosophers, lawyers, and other members of the intelligentsia, known generically as bioethicists, seek to replace these traditional values with what they call a "quality of life ethic," in which the moral value of human life is viewed subjectively instead of objectively. In bioethics thinking today, most often it is not the "human community" that matters but the "moral community."

Only "persons" inhabit this moral community, which wouldn't be a problem except that in modern bioethics, all humans are not necessarily persons. Some among us—the so-called nonpersons—count for less than others and may be excluded from the community itself, thereby being deprived of the rights and protections that persons enjoy. Among those at risk in America today are infants (particularly those born with disabilities), people with dementia and other profound cognitive disabilities, the dying, and the frail elderly—the same groups who fell victim to German doctors under the Nazi regime.

As in Germany then, so today in the United States euthanasia and assisted suicide are being energetically promoted and practiced. Indeed, people diagnosed with terminal illness in Oregon may ask their doctors to prescribe a lethal overdose for use in assisted suicide. On the other side of the country, Peter Singer, the world's foremost proponent of infanticide, whose philosophy and values clearly echo those of prewar Germany, is now a tenured bioethics professor at Princeton University.

It is in this context that two new books on the German medical Holocaust are worth considering. Although completely different in their approaches and areas of concentration, both books provide valuable knowledge and insights into the history of that awful era and reveal disturbing parallels to our own times.

GERMAN AUTHOR Wolfgang Weyers' *The Death of Medicine in Nazi Germany* takes a unique approach to the tale of the medical Holocaust. Weyers' style takes a while to grow on the reader, but in the end, it works quite well. The author methodically takes us through the fall of German medicine in a linear, A-to-Z fashion, beginning with the history of anti-Semitism in Germany, through the pre-Nazi attack on Hippocratic ethics, the Nazification of German medicine, and the resulting medical horrors. He ends with a chapter on the postwar years in which we learn that most doctors who participated in the medical evils of the time paid no significant penalty.

This story has been recited in several worthy books, perhaps most expertly by Robert Jay Lifton in *The Nazi Doctors*, and if Weyers' general historical recitation were the sum and substance of *The Death of Medi-*

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WESLEY J. SMITH *is the author of* Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder. *His next book will be* Culture of Death: The Destruction of Medical Ethics in America.

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cine in Nazi Germany, the book would be of only passing interest. Fortunately, the "big picture" is not all that interests Weyers. After first providing a relatively brief macro history in each chapter, he turns quickly to individual stories, a method that makes his book different from others of its kind and, in the end, an important contribution.

Weyers is a dermatologist and the official historian of the International Society of Dermatopathology, and he puts his dual interests to good use. He describes, in sometimes excruciating detail, how the times and events of that era influenced the medical specialty of dermatology as a whole and the physicians who practiced in the field as individuals. Making the story even more personal—and chilling—are the approximately 250 photographs of individual dermatologists from the era that make palpably real the human beings over and through whom the Nazi tyranny marched.

It is not a pretty story. We learn, for example, how prior to the coming of the Nazis, the field of dermatology was top-heavy with Jewish practitioners due to the general anti-Semitism of the medical profession of the time; dermatology was more open to Jews than other fields because it was considered less prestigious. Partially as a result, German dermatology was for a time the most advanced and professional in the world.

Then the horror arrives. We witness individual Jewish dermatologists—professors, medical association leaders, and some of the best practitioners in the specialty—victimized by the early Nazi directives that drove Jewish doctors out of medicine. Different people reacted in different ways. Some saw the future before it arrived and fled to other countries, particularly the United States. Others self-identified as loyal Germans and refused to leave. Many of these were not only forced out of medicine, but were eventually beaten, driven from their homes, forced into ghettos, gassed.

Weyers names the names and tells the stories of the "opportunists" who filled the vacuum left by the Jews, and he details the consequences for dermatology, which under Nazi auspices quickly became inhabited by quacks and charlatans. Like other areas of German life, dermatology became highly politicized, so Nazi friend and foe alike walked on proverbial eggshells. When Professor Eric Hoffman, a world-renowned dermatologist and an initial support-

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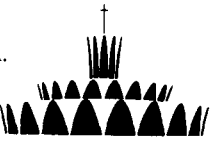

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er of the Nazi takeover, finally realized the evil that had been unleashed, he tried in vain to keep his university from becoming Nazified, resisting the attempts to promote incompetents who were politically converted. For his troubles, Hoffman was denounced to the Gestapo by his own colleagues and was soon removed from his university chair. Overt Nazi supporters were also sometimes victimized. When Josef Hamel, chair of the Department of Dermatology at the University of Jena, observed three of his students smashing a bust of Hitler, he reported falsely that the sculpture was broken accidentally. He too was reported to the Gestapo and sent to Buchenwald for six weeks for covering up the "political crime."

After the war, as dermatologists tried to rebuild their broken specialty, some universities invited their exiled Jewish colleagues back into the fold. Few returned. Weyers climaxes his book with the letter of Professor Emil Meirowsky, who refused reappointment to the University of Cologne with eloquent and righteous rage: "You have forfeited your call as professors," Meirowsky wrote to the dean of the medical faculty, "your call as doctors, as protagonists of humanity irrespective of race, creed, and color: I am called upon by my conscience to ask you to delete my name from the archives of your faculty."

This is history with a small "h," and it takes a little getting used to. But in the end Weyers' approach works in a manner akin to a newspaper photograph made up of dots in which each dot forms a tiny part of a total image. By focusing so intensely on the personal stories and tragedies of individual dermatologists, Weyers slowly brings into focus the larger historical picture and compellingly depicts the true evil that German doctors helped unleash on their patients, each other, their nation, and the world.

I AM NOT QUITE SURE what to make of *The Nazi War on Cancer* by Robert N. Proctor, a book that describes the German medical approach to treating and preventing cancer and the concerted effort made by public health authorities to combat smoking during the Nazi years. There is no question that Proctor has performed an admirable research job uncovering fascinating, unexpected, and, in a few cases, extraordinarily arcane historical nuggets. German medicine's approach to cancer during the Nazi years, Proctor reports, was literally decades ahead of its time. The Germans understood the connections of smoking, pollution, and diet to cancer, and saw that early detection was the key to prolonging and saving life. Accordingly, the public health authorities threw themselves energetically into cancer awareness and detection campaigns and even provided mass cancer screenings.

It is striking to realize that the Nazi government's methods were virtually identical to those currently employed in the United States and Canada. Then as now, public service announcements sought to dissuade people from smoking using celebrities (especially the nonsmoking Hitler) as examples. Then as now, tobacco companies were accused of addicting children. Then as now, restrictions were placed on tobacco advertising and smoking was banned in some public buildings. There were also serious calls for the government to ban all smoking in the workplace, and counseling centers were established to help people overcome their nicotine addiction.

THIS IS ALL WELL AND GOOD, as far as it goes. The problem with *The Nazi War on Cancer* is that after unearthing some very provocative and intriguing facts, Proctor doesn't do anything with them. He asserts, in an odd comment, that the Nazi campaign against smoking was "as fascist as the yellow stars and death camps." Does that mean our own anti-tobacco efforts are a quasi-fascist enterprise? Further, should we be alarmed by the striking similarities Proctor has uncovered between the Nazi methods of medical and public health advocacy and those of our

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own time? Having opened these and other interesting and important doors of inquiry, he doesn't take us through them. Instead, he writes rather tepidly:

> The history of science under Nazism is a history of both forcible sterilization and herbal medicine, of both genocidal "selection" and bans on public smoking. We do not need to forget Mengele's crimes, but we should also not forget that Dachau prisoners were forced to reproduce organic honey and that the SS cornered the European market in mineral water. Both elements—the monstrous and the prosaic—are key.

The key to what, exactly? The author doesn't say. And that's a shame, because Proctor presents the reader with parallels that we ought to worry about and ponder.

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Murder Most Malefic

WHY THEY KILL: THE DISCOVERIES OF A MAVERICK CRIMINOLOGIST. By RICHARD RHODES. *Knopf. 372 pp. $26.95.*

***Reviewed by* John J. DiIulio, Jr.**

LONNIE ATHENS, a little-known criminologist at Seton Hall University in New Jersey, has written two books about violent criminals, the first published in 1992, the second in 1997. Based on in-depth interviews with over a hundred prisoners convicted of extreme acts of violence, he argues that, without exception, people who commit vicious crimes first undergo a four-stage process he awkwardly terms "violentization." It begins with "brutalization": a parent or other authority figure batters a child, allows the child to witness him physically subjugate others, and then taunts the child into settling violently even minor playground disputes. Next comes "belligerency": the scared youth placates the mentor-menace by threatening peers who give the slightest provocation. "Violent performances" follow: the terror-in-training wins bloody fights, smells fear in others, and likes the

JOHN J. DIIULIO, JR. *is Frederick Fox Leadership Professor at the University of Pennsylvania, a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and the Brookings Institution, and a board member of Prison Fellowship Ministries.*

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smell. Finally, there is "virulency": the child-predator preaches to himself about the virtues of violence, and bonds socially only with others who share, or can be brutalized into sharing, his savage-or-be-savaged worldview.

Richard Rhodes, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, thinks Lonnie Athens is an undiscovered genius. In the prologue to *Why They Kill: The Discoveries of a Maverick Criminologist*, Rhodes writes that he himself was tortured and starved by his stepmother. "As a result of my extended personal encounter with evil," he reflects, "most of my books have examined human violence in one form or another, always for the purpose of discovering what causes such violence and how it might be prevented, mitigated, or at least survived." Intrigued by Athens' first book, Rhodes sought him out and learned that Athens, too, had been brutalized as a child. "Athens' personal experience of violence," he concludes, "prepared him to find what previous investigators have missed."

In Athens' own words, other researchers overlooked what heinous criminals "thought about when they killed, raped, and assaulted." His graphic prisoner case histories—the hammer-wielding cop killer, the droll double-rapist, the murderer who said he "righteously couldn't wait to see the look" on his victim's face as he "charged right up to him, rammed the barrel in his chest, and pulled the trigger," and dozens more—plainly indicate that extremely violent people "consciously construct violent plans of action before they commit violent criminal acts." Of course, not every maltreated child becomes a cold-blooded killer (Rhodes and Athens, for example). Those who would become truly vicious felons must first develop "unmitigated violent" self-understandings (or "phantom communities" in Athens' jargon) that provide them with "pronounced and categorical moral support for acting violently toward other people."

As Rhodes observes, the "violent criminals Athens interviewed were extreme examples of a barbaric individualism antagonistic to society, which is one reason why so many people romanticize violent crime." Many researchers do define criminality down, pretending that even callous chronic offenders can be rehabilitated. If liberal ideology does not blind them, quantitative methodology often does. Not only have many number-crunching criminologists never met a prisoner they didn't like, they have never met a prisoner, period.

Rhodes' maverick criminologist will have none of it. Even the most brutalized and degraded souls, argues Athens, "can always exercise some degree of control over their conduct." He finds that even kids as young as fourteen can complete violentization and behave self-consciously as ruthless, remorseless predators. Indeed, Athens explicitly interprets certain violent criminal acts as "malefic" (from the Latin word for evil, *maleficium*). "The predatory violent actions of ultraviolent criminals," he avers, place them "outside the reach of any presently devisable long-term rehabilitation programs."

I confess that before reading *Why They Kill*, I had never heard of Athens. There are many first-rate ethnographies of violent felons behind bars and on the streets, but Rhodes has a done a service by bringing Athens' work to light. The book crashes, however, when Rhodes stops quoting Athens and starts flying solo, beginning in the

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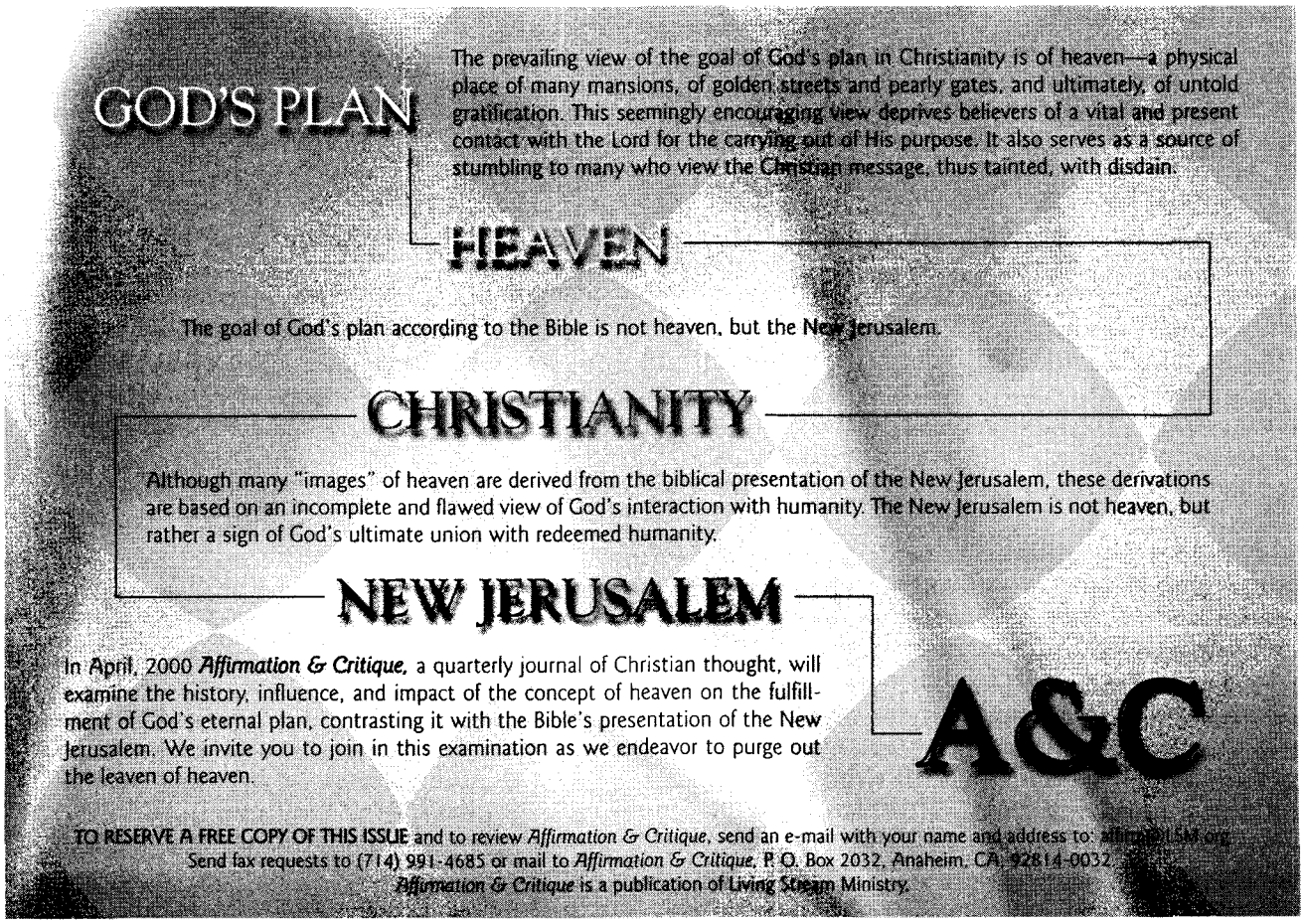
second half of the book in which he applies the violentization thesis to the careers of celebrity killers and rapists (Lee Harvey Oswald, Mike Tyson, and others). Mercy.

Worse, Rhodes lectures us about a "support for violence against children" not discussed by Athens, namely, "conservative Christianity." You see, "the old dogma that the child is inherently evil and requires violent subjugation to chasten" remains "a tenet of fundamentalist and evangelical belief." After all, "the Bible was written in a barbaric era." First cousin to the white religious rabble is "the African American community," which, "once violently enslaved, has depended for its survival partly on conservative Christian values that encourage physical punishment." Double mercy.

Such antipathy toward "conservative Christian values" would be comical were it not so commonplace. As Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio report in the Spring 1999 *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37 percent of highly educated white Americans are "intensely antagonistic" toward orthodox Christians. For the record, recent empirical studies of child-rearing practices indicate that, if anything, Christian fundamentalists make exceptionally loving, capable parents. Also, several social scientists have completed superb statistical studies suggesting that transmitting Christian religious values reduces the rates at which poor young urban males commit or suffer serious violence.

STILL, CONCENTRATIONS and fluctuations in rates of violent victimization are very difficult to explain. In the mid-1990s, for example, black males aged fourteen to twenty-four constituted 1 percent of the population, 17 percent of homicide victims, and 30 percent of homicide perpetrators. From 1991 to 1993, the black homicide rate peaked. Between 1993 and 1997, the black homicide rate suddenly fell by 40 percent. About four thousand fewer blacks of all ages were killed in 1997 than would have been killed had the peak homicide rates proved to be a decade-long plateau. But nobody really understands why blacks still kill and get killed at higher rates than whites, and nobody has an adequate explanation either for variations in black homicide rates, or for the fact that black-on-black violence has afflicted some otherwise comparable big-city neighborhoods more than others.

Athens advised Rhodes that "peo-


GOD'S PLAN
The prevailing view of the goal of God's plan in Christianity is of heaven—a physical place of many mansions, of golden streets and pearly gates, and ultimately, of untold gratification. This seemingly encouraging view deprives believers of a vital and present contact with the Lord for the carrying out of His purpose. It also serves as a source of stumbling to many who view the Christian message, thus tainted, with disdain.
HEAVEN
The goal of God's plan according to the Bible is not heaven, but the New Jerusalem.
CHRISTIANITY
Although many "images" of heaven are derived from the biblical presentation of the New Jerusalem, these derivations are based on an incomplete and flawed view of God's interaction with humanity. The New Jerusalem is not heaven, but rather a sign of God's ultimate union with redeemed humanity.
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In April, 2000 Affirmation & Critique, a quarterly journal of Christian thought, will examine the history, influence, and impact of the concept of heaven on the fulfillment of God's eternal plan, contrasting it with the Bible's presentation of the New Jerusalem. We invite you to join in this examination as we endeavor to purge out the leaven of heaven.
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ple who commit heinous violent crimes always have some violence-related experiences in their backgrounds," although such experiences "may sometimes be deeply hidden." Always? I myself have never encountered a predatory offender who had not himself suffered extreme violence before doing unto others what had been done to him. But I have not studied a representative sample of such offenders, and neither has Athens.

We know from the best longitudinal data that child maltreatment increases by about 40 percent the chances that a person will at some point get into trouble with the law. But we also know that 80 percent of all prisoners, like over 80 percent of the rest of us, report no history of abuse or neglect. We know that boys raised in mother-only homes are about twice as likely as otherwise comparable boys to commit crimes that lead to imprisonment. But we also know that not even most mother-only, maltreated boys end up committing heinous violent crimes. Even taking Athens' no-exceptions violentization thesis at face value, one strains to imagine how it could explain, say, the post-1990 data on black homicide rates outlined above. The all-encompassing violentization thesis would be more far persuasive as a falsifiable, exceptions-are-possible theory.

Rhodes ends the book with recommendations: have schools serve as "centers for community crime prevention"; roll back family preservation policies that give "violent caretakers a second chance"; listen to liberals who call for "anger management" programs; heed conservatives who call for selectively incarcerating violent criminals; and read Athens. Not all bad, but first we need schools to teach poor inner-city minority children how to read. As for public policies that put protecting children first, that battle has so far been lost in the attack by secular elites and social welfare bureaucrats on "conservative Christian values," since it is often the people who hold such values who monitor, mentor, and minister to at-risk urban youth.

But let's make a covenant, Mr. Rhodes: I study and tout Athens' work, and you study the Bible. Begin with "In the beginning" and meditate to Genesis 4. Cain, angry that God had favored Abel's offering but not his own, started thinking about murder. "Why are you so resentful and crestfallen?" the Lord asked Cain. "If you do well, you can hold up your head; but if not, sin is a demon lurking at the door: his urge is toward

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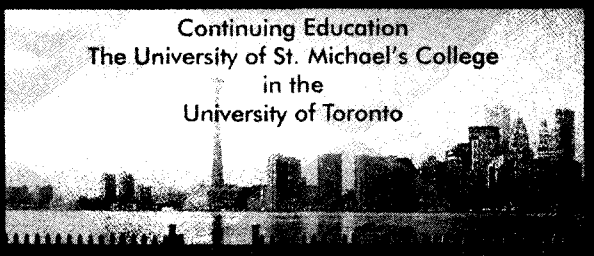

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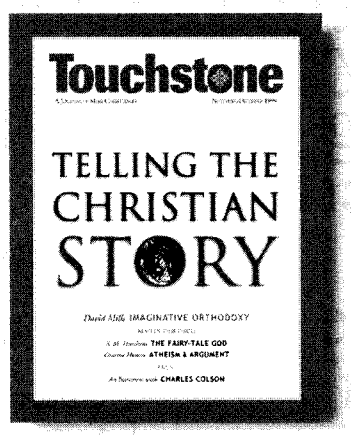
you, yet you can be his master." As noted in my annotated Catholic Bible: "Genesis 4:7: 'demon lurking': in Hebrew, *robes*, literally 'croucher,' like the similar Akkadian term *rabisu*, to designate a certain kind of evil spirit."

That spirit of evil is "why they kill." It is what hardens them to act as if (but only as if) they are deaf to natural law. In Isaiah 42:2, the Lord reminds us that "a bruised reed He shall not break, and a smoldering wick He shall not quench." Even the young "bruised reed" who becomes a violent "smoldering wick" is still a child of God. Orthodox Christians believe that even a man imprisoned for murder most malefic yet gains God's mercy should he ever truly repent. He cannot be rehabilitated, but he can be saved. How "barbaric."



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"Even when theological liberalism has managed to remove the illiberal Scriptures from the churches as divine authority, the book of nature still inexorably points toward a higher power shaping a universe of frightfully illiberal ends. If there is a God, everyone but the liberals knows he is not liberal."

— *S. M. Hutchens* *Volume 13, Number 1, Page 23*

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BRIEFLY NOTED

A THEORY OF JUSTICE: REVISED EDITION. By JOHN RAWLS. *Belknap/Harvard University Press. 538 pp. $22.*

Among academics, John Rawls' massive 1971 book *A Theory of Justice* is arguably the most influential work of political philosophy published in the second half of the twentieth century. It has spawned innumerable commentaries, so that the pages of professional political theory journals like *Philosophy and Public Affairs* often drearily read like extended meditations on Rawls' thought. Now, almost thirty years after *A Theory of Justice*'s first appearance, Harvard University Press has published a new, revised edition of the book. Though Rawls has modified the text—the new edition follows the German translation of 1975, when Rawls first made the changes—it still is astonishingly out of touch with anything resembling political life as we know it, in our time or any time. Bereft of a coherent theory of human nature, unconcerned with social theory or history, silent on the most powerful dilemmas and tragedies of the age—from the struggle between free societies and their totalitarian enemies to the weaknesses of democratic regimes to the role of religion in public life—*A Theory of Justice* is political philosophy designed by and for liberal Harvard professors. To articulate his central idea of justice as fairness, Rawls famously asks us to imagine being behind a "veil of ignorance," stripped of everything that makes us

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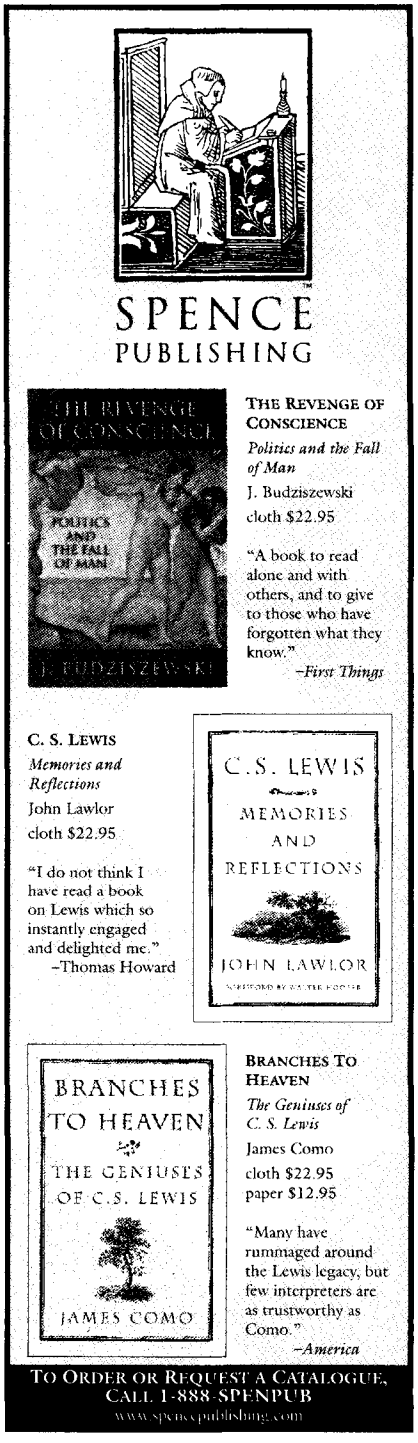
who we are—our passionate convictions, our abilities, our attachments and affinities—and then to decide what kind of society we want to live in. Since behind the veil we don't know if we're talented or talentless, rich or poor, ambitious or lazy, Rawls tells us, we'd want a society in which inequalities of wealth and power could only be justified if they benefited, not society as a whole, but those at the bottom—since the lazy or talentless might be me and you. This egalitarianism, achieved through law and politics, would become the touchstone of any just society. In Rawls' coercive vision, a kind of liberal authoritarianism, society claims everything the individual owns—including his talent—for the sake of the least successful. In practice, *A Theory of Justice*'s agenda would result in a bloated government, robbing human beings of their initiative, their liberty, and (though Rawls appears ignorant of this obvious fact of economics) their prosperity. By abstracting himself from the differences in conviction, ability, motivation, attachment, and affinity that make up the real life of politics, Rawls empties political philosophy of content. He "solves" the political problem, in effect, by doing away with politics. The new edition addresses none of the glaring weaknesses of Rawls' approach. The principal changes are either cosmetic or, more tellingly, qualifications downplaying some of the egalitarian excesses of the original. In the original edition, for instance, Rawls argues that "no one deserves his greater natural capacity nor merits a more favorable starting place in society. But it does not follow that one should eliminate these distinctions. There is another way to deal with them." Critics keyed in on the implicit authoritarianism of Rawls' argument: What if there wasn't another way to deal with them? How would we "eliminate" them? Now Rawls sounds a little more sober. Replacing the last two sentences of the quote above: "But of course, this is no reason to ignore, much less eliminate, these distinctions." There are several such examples. But even in its slightly more prudent version, Rawls' hubristic and barren book still stands as a model of how *not* to think about politics.

— Brian C. Anderson

Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium. By Bart D. Ehrman. *Oxford University Press. 274 pp. $25.*

Historical criticism of the Bible often resembles Winston Churchill's famous description of democracy: the worst form of government ever invented—except for all the others. When one compares historical criticism to the more exotic reveries of the Church Fathers, for example, one cannot help but welcome more sober methods that try to give us, to the extent possible, what the biblical author might actually have had in mind. But a steady diet of the dreary fact-mongering that often passes for historical-critical method can make one suddenly long for a romanticized Antiquity or Middle Ages, much like industrial Victorians who developed a taste for Gothic architecture and the novels of Sir Walter Scott. In any event, Bart Ehrman has written what might be called in that regard the worst life of Jesus ever written—except for all the others. All of the virtues of the historical method applied to Jesus Christ are here abundantly displayed: sober dissection of the evidence available, a firm rejection of the loonier theories of historical critics (such as the thesis that Jesus was a Galilean Cynic philosopher), and a vivid sense for the historical context in which the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth would alone make sense. But the vices of the method are there as well: sometimes the author's engaging style becomes too flippant, especially given the sacredness of his topic; and he too easily jumps to the same conclusion as did Albert Schweitzer. Certainly Ehrman has rightly argued that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet whose ethics would make no sense except in terms of an imminent eschaton; but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as Hans Urs von Balthasar has shown, Jesus was not, *pace* Schweitzer and Ehrman, mistaken about the nearness of the end. Rather, his God-consciousness was so all-absorbing and total, and the entrance of the eternal God into time was so singular, that Jesus' death was for him necessarily the end of this world and the beginning of the new world of God's Kingdom. But for a rhetorically effective antidote to the nonsense so often purveyed by historians of the historical Jesus, this is the book to read.

— Edward T. Oakes, S.J.

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WHO OWNS AMERICA? A NEW DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. Edited by HERBERT AGAR and ALLEN TATE. *ISI Books. 450 pp. $24.95.*

In 1930 "Twelve Southerners" published a collection of essays under the title *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition.* It came to be regarded as the classic statement—the "manifesto"—of Southern Agrarianism. The volume intended as its sequel is less well known, and unfortunately so, for its concerns were less culture-bound. Published in 1936, *Who Owns America? A New Declaration of Independence* was less distinctly Southern and cultural, more broadly national and political. Allen Tate, one of the original Twelve Southerners, teamed up with Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Herbert Agar to collect twenty-one essays, not just from Southern Agrarians but from English distributists and a variety of other "decentralists"—historians, economists, psychologists, social theorists, literary critics, and poets who advocated the virtues of widely distributed proprietorship and comparative political and economic independence. The result was a book deeply informed by what we have since learned to call the principle of subsidiarity, which is the reason for its continuing, even increasing, relevance. As Agar put it in his Introduction, the book is about "the American dream"—the dream of widespread freedom, independence, and self-government. Those from whom Agar anticipated criticism seven decades ago are still the most likely to dissent: "the friends of Big Business, who dishonor the dream by saying that it has been realized, that it lies all about us today." Yes, the book represents a conservative critique of capitalism, or rather of plutocracy and "monopoly capitalism"; not socialists or central planners, these localists were lovers of liberty and property one and all. Their complaint was not with market freedom, but with the increasing dependence of men on centralized power, and with the prevailing quasi-Marxist confidence in the inevitability of that dependence. Of course, since the 1930s technology and the mass economy have only become more entwined with politics and the social order, and opposition to centralization and consolidation has hardly been rendered unnecessary by the collapse of communism. Indeed, with the triumph of capitalism and liberal democracy, what constitutes just order and humane scale are still our persistent economic, social, and political questions. Those who think seriously about such questions should not be deprived of their full intellectual patrimony, but for too long these challenging essays have been out of print and hard to come by. At last there is a new edition brought out by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. All of the original essays are here, from Tate, Agar, and other such recognizable names as Donald Davidson, John Crowe Ransom, Andrew Lytle, Robert Penn Warren, Cleanth Brooks, and Hilaire Belloc. The collection is framed by new material by Edward Shapiro: brief biographies of each contributor and, in a new Foreword, detailed historical background and some contemporary perspective. The republication of this volume fills a lacuna in the available literature of American political thought, and there is no longer any excuse for theorists of freedom, community, and democracy to neglect the decentralist tradition exemplified by these essays.

— Joshua P. Hochschild

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The American Myth of Religious Freedom. By Kenneth R. Craycraft, Jr. *Spence. 226 pp. $27.95.*

If politics makes strange bedfellows, religious politics makes stranger yet. At every juncture in this adapted dissertation, right-wing Straussian Catholic Kenneth R. Craycraft agrees with the position regarding American religious freedom advanced by Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, namely, that the Constitution requires a naked public square. Without taking into account the alternative interpretations advanced in these pages and elsewhere, Dr. Craycraft accepts all of the following: the *New York Times*' claim that a bishop who excommunicates a politician violates the First Amendment; Harold Bloom's description of Christianity in America since the Pilgrims as basically heterodox and Gnostic; Hobbes' understanding of natural rights as the assertion of individual autonomy; the view of Locke, Jefferson, and Madison that the Catholic Church is the enemy of religious freedom; and John Rawls' view that liberalism cannot accept those who claim to know a truth originating outside themselves. Quite understandably, then, Craycraft is not a big fan of American religious liberty, and does not want the Catholic Church (or any similar orthodox Christian church) to defend the American arrangement too heartily. As readers of this journal are well aware, however, there is a case to be made that the First Amendment encourages religion in public life, that American Protestantism is not exactly Gnostic, that there is a tradition of natural rights theories dating back to the Middle Ages that is compatible with natural and divine law (a point pressed home by, inter alia, Craycraft's dissertation advisor Ernest Fortin, a member of the First Things Editorial Advisory Board), that the Catholic Church is a promoter of religious freedom, and that the liberal state cannot flourish unless it acknowledges a source of legitimacy greater than itself. It would not be incorrect to say that this latter view of the religious question has gained the upper hand in public discourse today, with only the *Times*, Professors Bloom and Rawls, some justices of the Supreme Court, and a few recalcitrant others seriously defending the earlier position. This leaves one thinking that Dr. Craycraft's book might have been a stimulating romp—had it been published in 1979. That such a promising intellectual (and occa-

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sional contributor to this journal) seems to have ignored the state of the question makes one realize that, even after ten years of FIRST THINGS, there is still work to be done.

HATING WHITEY AND OTHER PROGRESSIVE CAUSES. By DAVID HOROWITZ. *Spence. 300 pages. $24.95.*

The author has, with Peter Collier, written best-selling books on, inter alia, the Kennedys and Rockefellers, and his *Radical Son* of 1997 stirred considerable—and, for the most part, constructive—controversy. Born into the world of the Communist Party in New York, Horowitz was in the sixties among the most prominent radical intellectuals. The present book in many way updates *Radical Son*, exposing the fatuities and dishonesties that characterize a left that the left stubbornly denies exists. Horowitz is a vigorous writer and relentless polemicist. When his arguments are not being ignored by those he criticizes, they are derided as the product of Horowitz's psychological need to continue in the radical mode of the sixties under the guise of conservative zealotry. In fact, *Hating Whitey*, like *Radical Son*, is a most instructive political tract for the times. Horowitz concludes that "heroic myths," such as that of the socialist revolution in its myriad reconfigurations, will continue as long as people persist in denying their mortality.

THE BRIDGE OVER THE RACIAL DIVIDE: RISING INEQUALITY AND COALITION POLITICS. By WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON. *University of California Press. 162 pp. $19.95.*

The author, a sociologist who over the years has argued for the priority of economics over race, says the purpose of the present tract is to help create a broad-based multiracial coalition, including liberal old-line churches, to redress economic inequalities. He recognizes, however, that it will be difficult to build the coalition he has in mind in times of continuing economic prosperity.

THE CATHOLIC IMAGINATION. By ANDREW GREELEY. *University of California Press. 198 pp. $22.*

Father Andrew Greeley has done much to give currency to the notion of the "cultural Catholic"—as distinct from the doctrinal, moral, or sacramental Catholic. Cultural Catholics may disagree with Church teaching and absent themselves from Mass, but they know they are incorrigibly, and for the most part happily, part of "the Catholic thing." The present book is a sociological riff on "the analogical imagination" developed by theologian David Tracy of the University of Chicago. When it comes to sex, community, art, salvation, and much else, there is a distinctive Catholic sensibility that is borne out also by social science data, although Greeley admits that the correlations he finds are sometimes tenuous. Although he repeatedly says that the Catholic sensibility is only different from, and not necessarily better than, Protestant and other sensibilities, he obviously believes it is better. As might be expected from the writer of sometimes salacious novels, Greeley is again enthusiastic about sacred horniness. The book is well worth a read, however, keeping in mind more firmly than Fr. Greeley does that the doctrinal, moral, and sacramental undergirds "the Catholic imagination," grounding it in truth. Without that grounding, Catholic sensibility becomes something like Jewishness without Judaism, a limping vestige of a once living faith.

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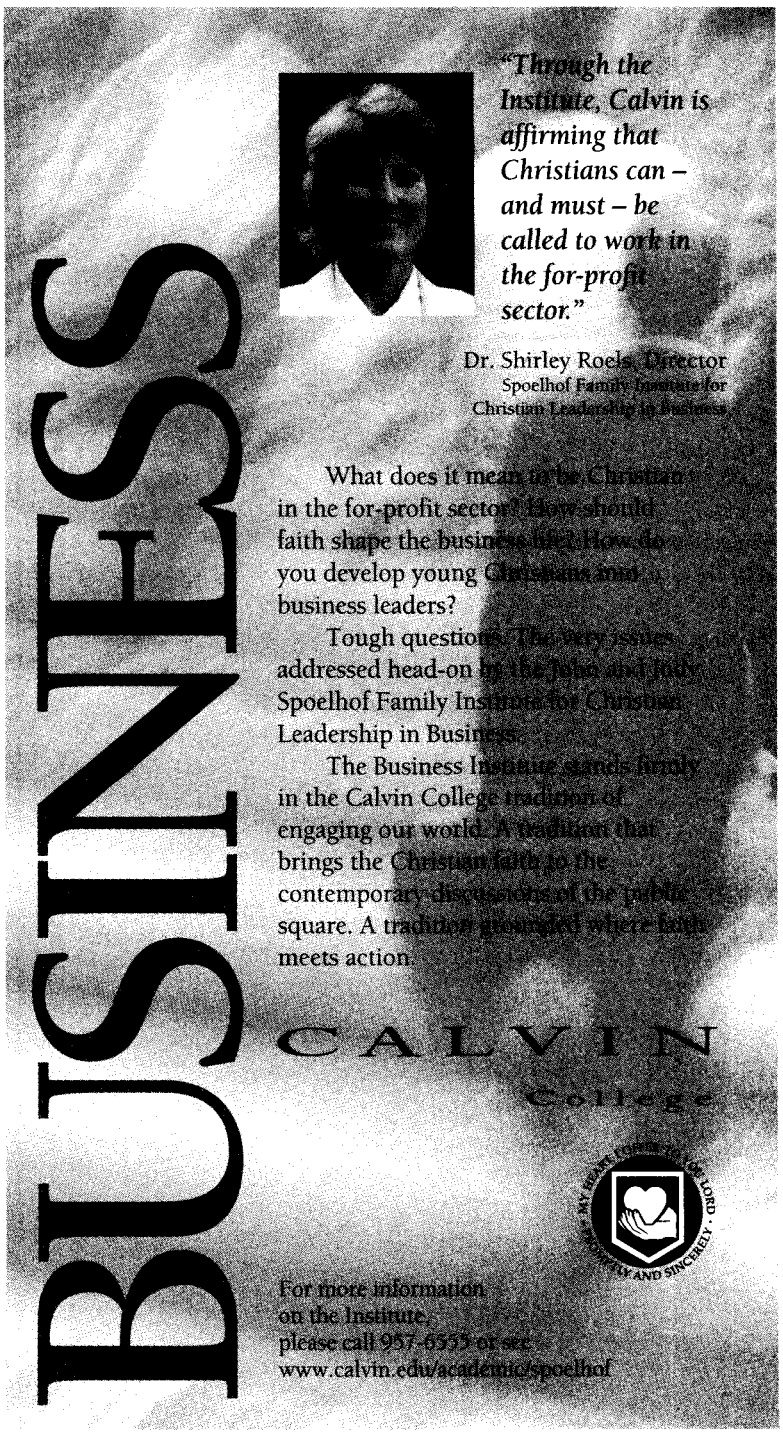
JOSEPH MCCARTHY: REEXAMINING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF AMERICA'S MOST HATED SENATOR. By ARTHUR HERMAN. *Free Press. 405 pp. $26.*

A very readable and informative exercise in historical revisionism. At times Herman, in order to fairly tell "the other side" of the story, falls into defending the indefensible, but his concluding narrative of Joe McCarthy's downfall, decline, and death is both moving and devastating. Herman is certainly correct in saying that, from what we know now, McCarthy was more often right than wrong about Communist spying and subversion in the U.S.—certainly he was more right than the establishment that relentlessly, and often viciously, attacked him—but when he was wrong he was terribly wrong. While the author agrees that McCarthy contributed to the myth of "McCarthyism" that was so dishonestly exploited by the anti-anti-Communists, his main fire is directed at the liberal and fellow traveling apologists for "the evil empire." For those who know only the conventional account of the evils of McCarthyism, this is a necessary book.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THE FABRIC OF HOPE. By GLENN TINDER. *Scholars Press. 240 pp. $21.95 paper.*

The author, who is no stranger to these pages, offers a graceful and learned exploration of the virtue of hope in its several representations and misrepresentations. He incisively debunks the delusory hopes of modernity, and makes a convincing case that hopeful engagement in everything from personal relations to politics requires a firm hold on the "last things" that make it reasonable to speak of final judgment and vindication.

CANTATE ET IUBILATE DEO: A DEVOTIONAL AND LITURGICAL HYMNAL. JAMES SOCIAS, General Editor. *Midwest Theological Forum/Sceptre/Our Sunday Visitor. 228 pp. $29.95.*

Intended as a supplementary resource for small settings of the Catholic Mass and for paraliturgical devotions, this beautifully prepared hymnal includes both very familiar and not-so-familiar texts and music of some of the Church's most treasured hymns. Each hymn is accompanied by an introduction that provides the background of the music, explains the spiritual point of the text, and

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suggests the liturgical occasion on which it is most appropriately used. Welcome is the inclusion of several traditional Latin arrangements of the Mass, as well as texts no longer used in the liturgy, such as the "Dies Irae." All the Latin texts are translated well. A worthy contribution to any chapel, and to the movement for liturgical reform.

Reconstructing History: The Emergence of a New Historical Society. Edited by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn. *Routledge. 373 pp. $21.99 paper.*

In 1998, under the presidency of the distinguished Eugene Genovese, the Historical Society was launched as an alternative to academic societies that had largely succumbed to the post-modernist and feminist trendiness that has undermined serious scholarship. Drawing historians from the left, the right, and points undetermined, the new society has quickly established itself as a major influence in the academy. The essays in this book (by, among others, John Patrick Diggins, Russell Jacoby, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Leo Ribuffo, and Sean Wilentz) testify to the society's heartening success. Of particular interest are the discussions over efforts to establish national standards for the teaching of American history.

The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is. By N. T. Wright. *InterVarsity. 202 pp. $14.*

Anglican New Testament scholar Wright provides a treatment of "the historical Jesus" that is attentive to both critical scholarship and living faith. The present book is a generally accessible version of his more academic *Jesus and the Victory of God.*

The Third Millennium: Reflections on Faith and Reason. By David Walsh. *Georgetown University Press. 242 pp. $65 cloth, $23.95 paper.*

The author teaches politics at Catholic University of America but is very much a philosopher in the mind and spirit of Eric Voegelin. These "reflections" are frequently meditative in character, accompanying the reader along the way into "the third millennium of Christ," who is the historically unsurpassable revelation of Being as Love. Walsh's faith and reason are joined in their universal reach, while respectful of the particularities that give meaning to the whole.

Equality and Liberty: Theory and Practice in American Politics. By Harry V. Jaffa. *Claremont Institute. 235 pp. $25.*

In honor of Jaffa's eightieth birthday, Claremont is reprinting six of his books that are out of print. The present volume, published in 1965, is a ringing defense of the Declaration of Independence and natural law as the foundation of the American Republic. It develops themes addressed in his earlier *Crisis of the House Divided* (discussed in this issue's symposium) and is dedicated, appropriately, to Leo Strauss.

Controversial Concordats. Edited by Frank J. Coppa. *Catholic University of America Press. 248 pp. $24.95 paper.*

A useful study of the Vatican's relations with Napoleon, Mussolini, and the Third Reich. The conclusion is that the Church today relies less on concordats or comprehensive legal agreements with regimes and more on its independent spiritual influence in protecting its own mission and basic human rights.

The Day After: Religious Dissent in the Presidential Crisis. By Gabriel Fackre. *Eerdmans. 74 pp. $10 paper.*

A retrospective on what religious leaders, mainly in the Protestant mainline, had to say about the Clinton impeachment and related debates about public morality, and on the response to the book on the same subject, *Judgment Day at the White House,* also edited by Fackre.

The End of Time: A Meditation on the Philosophy of History. By Josef Pieper. Translated by Michael Bullock. *Ignatius. 161 pp. $11.95 paper.*

Thanks to Ignatius Press for bringing back into print this splendid reflection on the nature of hope for a history that provides so many reasons for despair. The despair of grace-denying modernity, Pieper convincingly argues, is only thinly veiled by delusions of historical optimism. His proposal is that only those prepared to shed their martyr blood in witness to eternal truth are fortified to live honestly in a world bounded by time.

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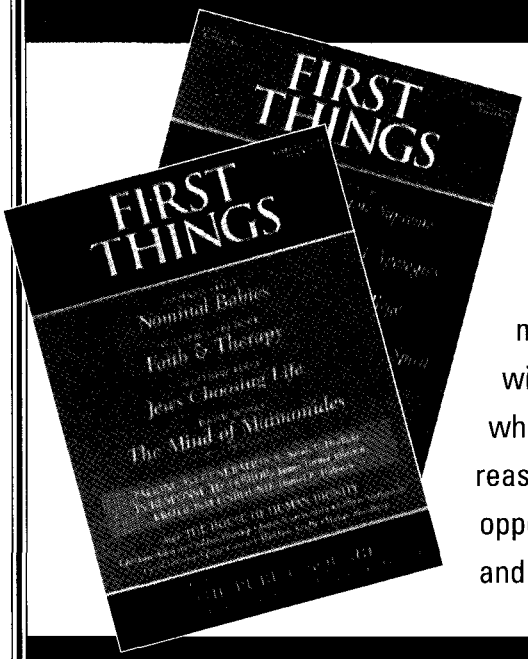

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A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Is Mormonism Christian?

That is not the only interesting question, but it is probably the most important. Most non-Mormons have little occasion to think about Mormonism, and those who do tend toward distinctly negative thoughts. Although there is this curious thing of recent years that many conservative Christians warmly welcome Mormons as allies in various cultural tasks. To cite but one recent instance, it was an alliance of Catholics, evangelicals, and Mormons that was instrumental in persuading the people of Hawaii to reject same-sex marriage. Yet a few issues ago we published an article by a Mormon doctor presenting the case for Natural Family Planning and received blistering letters of protest. We thought that the fact that the argument was not being advanced by a Catholic might make it more persuasive to some. But at least some readers did not see it that way. Didn't we know that Mormons are the enemies of Christ and his Church? Such views are stronger in the Northwest and, increasingly, in the Southwest where the Mormon presence is a force to be reckoned with.

Ours is an interreligious enterprise, basically but not exclusively Jewish and Christian. Dr. Bruce Hafen is on our Editorial Advisory Board. He has held prominent positions in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), including that of provost and dean of the law school at Brigham Young University. I can't say that many of my friends are Mormons, but some are. We are obliged to respect human dignity across the board, and to affirm common discernments of the truth wherever we find them. Where we disagree we should try to put the best possible construction on the position of the other, while never trimming the truth. That will become more important as Mormons become more of a presence, both in this country and the world. There are about ten million of them now, with about one-half of the membership in the U.S. Sociologist Rodney Stark—a non-Mormon with strong personal connections to the LDS—predicts that, on the basis of present growth patterns, there will be more than 265 million Mormons by the end of this century, making it the most important new religion in world history since Islam. For reasons I will come to, I think that is improbable. Put differently, if that happens, Mormonism will be something dramatically different from what it has been over the last century and a half.

Some while back we were sent for review the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism: The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedures of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.* It's a big five-volume set, written largely by professors at Brigham Young; we weren't sure what to do with it, but I've been reading in it with great benefit. Then comes a big new book by Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise,* published by HarperSanFrancisco (454 pp., $26). It is a remarkable piece of work and likely to be the best general introduction to Mormonism for years to come. The Ostlings are evangelical Protestants. Dick was for many years religion editor at *Time* and now covers religion for the Associated Press. I have had frequent occasion to say that he is one of the two or three best religion reporters in the country. Joan is a freelance writer with a background in the practice and teaching of journalism. What they have achieved with this assiduously researched and very readable book puts us all in their debt. Apparently the powers that be in Salt Lake City are ambivalent about the book, but it is probably as thorough and fair a treatment of the LDS by outsiders as they are likely to get.

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Much to Admire

The Ostlings find much to admire. Mormonism gives a whole new meaning to being "pro-family." In Mormon belief, families are, quite literally, forever. Proxies are baptized on behalf of the dead, and families and relatives hope to go on living together and procreating in a celestial eternity. All children are baptized at age eight, and at twelve boys (no girls allowed) take their place of responsibility and status by entering the first level of the priesthood—the priesthood, according to Joseph Smith, having been restored by John the Baptist in upstate New York in 1829. While bar mitzvah among Jews and confirmation among Christians too often means that young people graduate from their religious responsibilities, Mormon youth at that point in life graduate into intense and clearly defined responsibilities within the community. Also widely and justly admired is the LDS welfare system, whereby the community takes care of its own when they get into economic or other difficulty. At present, in a time of economic prosperity, only about 5 percent require help from the welfare system. (A figure, interestingly, about parallel with Edward Banfield's famous claim about the percentage of people in any society who will never be able to make it on their own.)

There is also no denying that the prohibition of alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine has a payoff. Mormons live, on average, eight to eleven years longer than other Americans, and death rates from cancer and cardiovascular diseases are about half those of the general population. Of course, it is fair to note, they do die of other things, and one may do one's own calculation about the risk worth taking for a scotch before dinner and a cigar afterward, never mind one's morning coffee. (The most recent Harvard longitudinal study found that the strongest positive correlation between health and habits is the daily consumption of about three ounces of wine or liquor. Go figure.) In addition, a strong emphasis on chastity sharply reduces sexually transmitted diseases, while a tightly knit and supportive community makes homicide and suicide rare. Put it all together, and one concludes that Mormonism is good for your physical health. Whether it is good for your spiritual health is a disputed question. (It should also be noted that medical data on the strongly committed in other religious communities are comparable to the Mormon findings.)

There are other things to admire. Brigham Young University, for instance, where, because of church subsidies, young Mormons get the entire package (tuition, room, board, etc.) for less than $10,000 a year. The ticket is slightly more for non-Mormons, but there are very few takers. There is also the Church Educational System, which involves hundreds of thousands in continuing education programs here and around the world. Nor can the most severe critics deny the energy, enthusiasm, and organization of the LDS in its missionary zeal, and in its dramatic presentation of its colorful history, whether through the Mormon Tabernacle Choir or annual pageants reenacting the key episodes of its sacred stories. In a world that seems to be largely adrift, it is no little thing to be part of an organized crusade in which you and those who are closest to you view your life as crucial to the unfolding of the cosmic drama.

Restoring the Church

The LDS is, among other things, a very big business tightly controlled from the top down. If one believes that the entire enterprise is based on revelation that is authoritatively interpreted by divinely appointed officers, it makes sense that control should be from the top down. The LDS claims that God chose Joseph Smith to reestablish the Church of Jesus Christ after it had disappeared some 1,700 years earlier following the death of the first apostles. To complicate the picture somewhat, God's biblical work was extended to the Americas somewhere around 2000 B.C. and continued here until A.D. 421. This is according to the *Book of Mormon*, the scriptures given to Joseph Smith on golden tablets by the Angel Moroni. American Indians are called Lamanites and are part of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Jesus came to preach to these Indians and for a long time there was a flourishing church here until it fell into apostasy, only to be restored, as the golden tablets foretold, by Joseph Smith. In addition to giving new scriptures, God commissioned Smith to revise the Bible, the text of which had been corrupted over the centuries by Jews and Christians.

Today's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles is, allegedly, in direct succession to Smith, and the First Presidency claims powers that would have made St. Peter, never mind most of his successors, blush. The top leadership is composed, with few exceptions, of men experienced in business and with no formal training in theology or related disciplines. The President (who is also prophet, seer, and revelator) is the oldest apostle, which means he is sometimes very old indeed and far beyond his prime. Decisions are made in the tightest secrecy, inevitably giving rise to suspicions and conspiracy theories among outsiders and a

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substantial number of members. Revenues from tithes, investments, and Mormon enterprises have built what the Ostlings say "might be the most efficient churchly money machine on earth." They back up with carefully detailed research their "conservative" estimate that LDS assets are in the rage of $25-30 billion.

Protecting the Stories

But, of course, the most important control is over the sacred stories, and attendant truth claims, upon which the entire enterprise rests. Of the telling of history, Orwell wrote, "He who controls the past controls the future and he who controls the present controls the past." The Ostlings devote a great deal of attention to "dissenters and exiles" who have tried to tell the sacred stories honestly, and in a manner that might bring them into conversation with other stories of the world. Some may think the Ostlings devote too much attention to these "troublemakers," but I think not. In my limited experience with, for instance, people associated with the publication *Sunstone*, these are devout Mormons who are seized by the correct intuition that truth that must be protected within the circle of true believers, that cannot intelligently engage critical examination by outsiders, is in some fundamental sense doubtfully true. Some of the "dissenters and exiles" may be dismissable as troublemakers—a species all too familiar in other religious communities as well. I expect, however, that what most of these people are trying to do is much more important to the possible futures of the LDS than all the billions in assets, massive building programs, and ambitiously organized missionary campaigns combined.

To give a credible account of the sacred stories and truth claims is no easy task. Not to put too fine a point on it, the founding stories and doctrines of Mormonism appear to the outsider as a bizarre phantasmagoria of fevered religious imagination not untouched by perverse genius. Germinated in the "burnt-over district" of upstate New York in the early nineteenth century, where new religions and spiritualities produced a veritable rainforest of novel revelations, the claims of Joseph Smith represent a particularly startling twist of the kaleidoscope of religious possibilities. In 1831, Alexander Campbell, cofounder of the Disciples of Christ, said that Smith pasted together "every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years." Much of the teaching reflects the liberal Protestantism of the time, even the Transcendental and Gnostic fevers that were in the air: e.g., a God in process of becoming, progressive revelation, the denial of original sin, and an unbridled optimism about the perfectibility of man. Mix that in with the discovery of golden tablets written in a mysterious language, the bodily appearance of God the Father and Son, angelic apparitions, and a liberal dose of Masonic ritual and jargon, and the result is, quite simply, fantastic. The question, of course, is whether it is true.

In what sense true? It is true in the sense that it is meaningful for those who believe it uncritically, and even for more critical souls who embrace the community whose fabulous founding, they contend, points to higher truths. In the conventional version controlled by LDS authorities, it is true if you believe it is true. Thus is the back door shut against potentially subversive reason. One possible response is to say that all religion is finally based on faith and is incapable of rational demonstration. Did not St. Paul say that the gospel of Christ is "foolishness" according to the wisdom of the world? Of course he did. But every part of the traditional Christian story has been and is subjected to critical examination, by believers and nonbelievers alike—and that examination, with its attending disagreements, will go on to the end of time. Over two thousand years, from Origen and Augustine through Anselm, Aquinas, Newman, Barth, and Balthasar, the truth claims of Christianity have engaged, with utmost intensity and sophistication, alternative and opposing construals of reality. In short, there is a very long Christian intellectual tradition. There is not, or at least not until very recently, such a Mormon tradition. And those who are interested in encouraging such inquiry typically find themselves in the company of "dissenters and exiles." Keep in mind, however, that Mormonism is not yet two centuries old. A youngish Mormon intellectual today is in relation of time to Joseph Smith roughly comparable to Origen in relation to the apostles.

But his task is ever so much more difficult than that of Irenaeus, Origen, and the many other early Christian thinkers. There is, for instance, the surpassingly awkward fact that not a single person, place, or event that is unique to the *Book of Mormon* has ever been proven to exist. Outside the *fanum* of true believers, these tales cannot help but appear to be the product of fantasy and fabrication. There is, moreover, a corrosive tradition of make-believe in the LDS, such as the claim that Joseph Smith translated the *Book of Abraham*—a book he said was written by Abraham—from Egyptian papyri that were later proven to be nothing but conventional funerary inscriptions.

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The sanitized story of Mormonism promoted by the LDS tries to hide so much that cannot be hidden. The Ostlings are to be commended for resisting sensationalism in relating the sensational history of polygamy in the LDS, including Joseph Smith's coercive use of threats of eternal damnation in order to procure young women he desired as additional wives. (On this score, the quasi-official *Encyclopedia* is also considerably more candid than the usual LDS presentations.) And how, except by a practiced schizophrenia, can LDS biblical scholars engage with other scholars if they are required to give credence to the normative status of Smith's "translation" (i.e., rewriting) of the King James Bible? There is a long list of particulars in the formidable obstacles to be overcome if anything like a credible intellectual tradition is to be secured, and not least among the obstacles is the history of LDS leadership in backstopping secretiveness with mendacity. Taking note of these realities is not to deny the frequent moral courage, indeed heroism, of the early leadership, or the continuing devotion and talent of their successors.

Missionary Zeal

The LDS is much given to boosterism, and it is no surprise that its leaders relish the projections of almost exponential growth offered by such as Rodney Stark. Nobody can help but be impressed by the thousands of clean-cut Mormon young men who go on mission, two by two, knocking on the doors of the world, but the Ostlings helpfully put this missionary enterprise into perspective by comparing it with the many times larger enterprise of various Christian groups, noting as well that, unlike the Mormons, these missionaries do not limit themselves to winning converts but minister to the illiterate, the poor, and others in need. Moreover, these Christian efforts result in large and thriving indigenous churches that engage and transform local cultures, whereas the Mormon mission, totally controlled and directed from Salt Lake City, is about as pure an instance of American cultural imperialism as can be imagined, albeit a benevolently intended imperialism.

It appears also that the figures of Mormon growth are considerably inflated, not taking into account the massive defections through the back door, especially in developing countries. The Ostlings observe, "Mormonism succeeds by building on a preexisting Christian culture and by being seen as an add-on, drawing converts through a form of syncretism. Mormonism flourishes best in settings with some prior Christianization." There is, in this view, a parasitic dynamic in Mormon growth. Yet the Ostlings suggest that, despite doctrinal and demographic problems, Mormonism may continue to thrive. "Ours is a relational era," they write, "not a conceptual one. Members are more likely to be attracted by networking and community than by truth claims. The adherents appear to be contented or docile in their discontent, except for some thousands of intellectuals." I am not so sure, and that brings us to the opening question of whether Mormonism is Christian or a new religion tenuously founded on fables and sustained by authoritarian management. Maybe ours is a time in which truth does not matter that much in terms of institutional flourishing, a time in which communities can get along with useful, if not particularly noble, lies. But we should not too easily resign ourselves to that conclusion.

An Insulting Question

Asking whether Mormonism is Christian or Mormons are Christians (a slightly different question) is thought to be insulting. "How can you ask that," protests a Mormon friend, "when we clearly love the Lord Jesus as much as we do?" It is true that St. Paul says that nobody can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). But that only indicates that aspects of Mormon faith are touched by the Holy Spirit, as is every element of truth no matter where it is found. A Mormon academic declares that asking our question "is a bit like asking if African Americans are human." No, it is not even a bit like that. "Christian" in this context is not honorific but descriptive. Nobody questions whether Mormons are human. To say that Jews, Muslims, or Buddhists are not Christians is no insult. It is a statement of fact, indeed of respect for their difference. The question is whether that is a fact and a difference that applies also to Mormonism.

The question as asked by Mormons is turned around: are non-Mormons who claim to be Christians in fact so? The emphatic and repeated answer of the Mormon scriptures and the official teaching of the LDS is that we are not. We are members of "the great and abominable church" that was built by frauds and impostors after the death of the first apostles. The true church and true Christianity simply went out of existence, except for its American Indian interlude, until it was rediscovered and reestablished by Joseph Smith in upstate New York, and its claims will be vindicated when Jesus returns, sooner rather than later, at a prophetically specified intersection in Jackson County, Missouri.

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The Ostlings, in a manner common among evangelical Protestants, address the question of whether Mormons are Christians exclusively in terms of doctrine. Mormonism claims that God is an exalted man, not different in kind as Creator is different in kind from creature. The Mormon claim is, "What God was, we are. What God is, we will become." Related to this is the teaching that the world was not created ex nihilo but organized into its present form, and that the trespass in the Garden of Eden, far from being the source of original sin, was a step toward becoming what God is. Further, Mormonism teaches that there is a plurality of gods. Mormons dislike the term "polytheism," preferring "henotheism," meaning that there is a head God who is worshiped as supreme. If Christian doctrine is summarized in, for instance, the Apostles' Creed as understood by historic Christianity, official LDS teaching adds to the creed, deviates from it, or starkly opposes it almost article by article.

LDS teaching that believers are on the way to becoming gods has, of course, interesting connections with early church fathers and their teaching on "theosis" or "deification," a teaching traditionally accented more in the Christianity of the East than of the West, but theologically affirmed by both. Some Mormon thinkers have picked up on those connections and have even recruited, not very convincingly, C. S. Lewis in support of LDS doctrine. (Lewis simply offers rhetorical riffs on classical Christian teaching and in no way suggests an ontological equivalence between Creator and creature.)

Christianity and the History of Christians

Beyond these doctrinal matters, as inestimably important as they are, one must ask what it means to be Christian if one rejects the two thousand year history of what in fact is Christianity. Christianity is inescapably doctrinal but it is more than doctrines. Were it only a set of doctrines, Christianity would have become another school of philosophy, much like other philosophical schools of the Greco-Roman world. Christianity is the past and present reality of the society composed of the Christian people. As is said in the Nicene Creed, "We believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." That reality encompasses doctrine, ministry, liturgy, and a rule of life. Christians disagree about precisely where that Church is to be located historically and at present, but almost all agree that it is to be identified with the Great Tradition defined by the apostolic era through at least the first four ecumenical councils, and continuing in diverse forms to the present day. That is the Christianity that LDS teaching rejects and condemns as an abomination and fraud.

Yet Mormonism is inexplicable apart from Christianity and the peculiar permutations of Protestant Christianity in nineteenth-century America. It may in this sense be viewed as a Christian derivative. It might be called a Christian heresy, except heresy is typically a deviation within the story of the Great Tradition that Mormonism rejects tout court. Or Mormonism may be viewed as a Christian apostasy. Before his death in 1844, Joseph Smith was faced with many apostasies within the Mormon ranks, and since then there have been more than a hundred schisms among those who claim to be his true heirs. Still today LDS leaders quote Smith when censuring or excommunicating critics. For instance, this from Smith: "That man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way, while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly, that man is in the high road to apostasy."

With respect to the real existing Christianity that is the Church, the words apply in spades to Joseph Smith. He knew, of course, that he was rejecting the Christianity of normative tradition, and he had an explanation. On the creation ex nihilo question, for instance, he declared only weeks before his death: "If you tell [critics] that God made the world out of something, they will call you a fool. But I am learned, and know more than all the world put together. The Holy Ghost does, anyhow; and he is within me, and comprehends more than all the world; and I will associate myself with him." By definition, he could not be apostate because he spoke for God. It is an answer, of sorts.

The history of Christianity, notably since the sixteenth-century Reformation, is littered with prophets and seers who have reestablished "the true church," usually in opposition to the allegedly false church of Rome, and then, later, in opposition to their own previously true churches. There are many thousands of such Christian groups today. Most of them claim to represent the true interpretation of the Bible. A smaller number lay claim to additional revelations by which the biblical witness must be "corrected." One thinks, for instance, of the Unification Church of Rev. Sun Myung Moon. There are other similarities between Mormonism and the Unification Church, such as the emphasis on the celestial significance of marriage and family. According to the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, "Gods and humans are the same species of being, but at different stages of development in a divine

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continuum, and the heavenly Father and Mother are the heavenly pattern, model, and example of what mortals can become through obedience to the gospel."

Another Religion

Some have suggested that the LDS is a Christian derivative much as Christianity is a Jewish derivative, but that is surely wrong. The claim of Christianity is that its gospel of Jesus Christ is in thorough continuity with the Old Testament and historic Israel, that the Church is the New Israel, which means that it is the fulfillment of the promise that Israel would be "a light to the nations." The Church condemned Marcion's rejection of the Old Testament, and she never presumed to rewrite or correct the Hebrew Scriptures on the basis of a new revelation. On the contrary, she insisted that the entirety of the old covenant bears witness to the new. While it is a Christian derivative, the LDS is, by way of sharpest contrast, in radical discontinuity with historic Christianity. The sacred stories and official teachings of the LDS could hardly be clearer about that. For missionary and public relations purposes, the LDS may present Mormonism as an "add-on," a kind of Christianity-plus, but that is not the official narrative and doctrine.

A closer parallel might be with Islam. Islam is a derivative of Judaism and Christianity. Like Joseph Smith, Muhammad in the seventh century claimed new revelations and produced in the Qur'an a "corrected" version of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, presumably by divine dictation. Few dispute that Islam is a new and another religion, and Muslims do not claim to be Christian, although they profess a deep devotion to Jesus. Like Joseph Smith and his followers, they do claim to be the true children of Abraham. Christians in dialogue with Islam understand it to be an interreligious, not an ecumenical, dialogue. Ecumenical dialogue is dialogue between Christians. Dialogue with Mormons who represent official LDS teaching is interreligious dialogue.

One must again keep in mind that Mormonism is still very young. It is only now beginning to develop an intellectually serious theological tradition. Over the next century and more, those who are now the "dissidents and exiles" may become the leaders in forging, despite the formidable obstacles, a rapprochement with historic Christianity, at which point the dialogue could become ecumenical. As noted earlier, there is the interesting phenomenon of Mormon thinkers appealing to the Christian tradition, from Irenaeus through C. S. Lewis, in support of aspects of their doctrine. And there is the poignant and persistent insistence of Mormons, "We really are Christians!" Sometimes that claim means that they really are Christians and the rest of us are not. Increasingly, at least among some Mormons, the claim is that they are Christians in substantively the same way that others are Christians.

It is a claim we should question but not scorn. Such a claim contains, just possibly, the seed of promise that over time, probably a very long time, there could be within Mormonism a development of doctrine that would make it recognizable as a peculiar but definite Christian communion. Such attempted development, however, could produce a major schism between Mormons who are determined to be Christian, on the one hand, and the new religion taught by the LDS on the other.

Meanwhile, Mormonism and the impressive empire of the LDS will likely be with us for a long time. They are no longer an exotic minority that is, by virtue of minority status, exempt from critical examination and challenge. Such examination and challenge, always fair-minded and sympathetic, is exemplified by the Ostlings' very helpful book, *Mormon America*. I am skeptical about the more dramatic projections of Mormon growth in the future. That depends in part on the degree to which the Ostlings are right in thinking our era is "relational" rather than "conceptual." It depends in larger part on developments internal to the LDS and transformations in its self-understanding and self-presentation to the world. The leadership of the LDS will have to decide whether its growth potential is enhanced or hampered by presenting Mormonism as a new religion or as, so to speak, another Christian denomination. Sometimes they seem to want to have it both ways, but that will become increasingly difficult. And, of course, for Mormons whose controlling concern is spiritual, intellectual, and moral integrity, questions of marketing and growth, as well as questions of institutional vitality and communal belonging, must be clearly subordinated to the question of truth.

As for the rest of us, we owe to Mormon Americans respect for their human dignity, protection of their religious freedom, readiness for friendship, openness to honest dialogue, and an eagerness to join hands in social and cultural tasks that advance the common good. That, perhaps, is work enough, at least for the time being.

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Are You Mentally Disordered?

The Surgeon General's report on mental illness has been the object of so much criticism and even derision that perhaps we should just let it die a merciful death. But it seems to me there are at least a couple of aspects that have not received the attention they deserve. The gist of the report, you may remember, is that "one in every five Americans experiences a mental disorder in any given year, and half of all Americans have such disorders at some time in their lives." The purpose of the report, enthusiastically backed by the mental health industry, is that, through insurance and other means, billions of additional dollars should be spent on therapy.

As anyone knows who has had to cope with it in families and friends, mental disorder can be a dreadfully serious business. When mental disorder is handled as it is by this report, however, the subject is trivialized and politicized in a way that invites dismissiveness. The intention to launch another campaign of political correctness is underscored by the frequent comparisons with the 1964 Surgeon General's report on smoking. I recall another front page story in the *New York Times* about twenty years ago when the psychological establishment issued a report claiming that something like 30 percent of the population of New York City, and 45 percent of people in Manhattan, were mentally disordered. Based upon my experience in New York, I thought the figures much too low.

So it is also with the new nationwide statistic of one in five. I should think that, given the definition of disorder, the figure is at least four in five. The report defines disorders as "alterations in thinking, mood, or behavior that cause distress or impair a person's ability to function." They include "depression, attention-deficit or hyperactivity disorder, and phobias." Surely most people experience something along those lines at least once a year. I know that I do. There are days when I am so depressed and out of sorts with the world that I can't get a thing done; there are other days when I suffer from the delusion that I've more or less figured out the mystery of life and can't wait to proclaim my discovery from the housetops. I don't know which is the greater disorder.

I am, like the Mikado, making up a little list of people in need of mental treatment. The task is greatly facilitated by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association, which lists more than three hundred kinds of mental illness. A criterion of Antisocial Personality Disorder is "impulsivity or failure to plan ahead." Gotcha. Especially if you suffer from an impulse to spell impulsiveness "impulsivity." Another criterion is "irritability and aggressiveness." I apologize. Histrionic Personality Disorder is something else. Such people want to be "the center of attention." Check out your five-year-old. Another sign: "Considers relationships to be more intimate than they really are." Ah, Alice. She broke my heart in high school. And just about every adolescent I have known, certainly including myself, is certifiable by the criteria of what is called Oppositional Defiant Disorder: "1) Often loses temper. 2) Argues with adults. 3) Deliberately annoys people. 4) Is touchy or easily annoyed by others." And so forth. Of special interest is Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder: "Is over-conscientious, scrupulous, and inflexible about matters of morality, ethics, or values (not accounted for by cultural or religious identification)." I love the parenthesis that gives some of us an out. Presumably, if we're over-conscientious, scrupulous, etc., we religious types are excused from treatment. The prescription is to get a new culture or religion. Finally, if you deny that you are suffering from a mental disorder, you should know that that is a symptom of a disorder known as Non-Compliance with Treatment. It is an additional sign of disorder if you resent, refuse to pay, or pay late your bills for treatment. One has to admire the DSM for the way it ties up all the strings on the therapeutic package.

Inducing Anxiety

The Surgeon General's report takes Philip Rieff's argument about "the therapeutic society" to the point of absurdity, it being assumed that "health" is an unremitting sense of well-being and optimal functioning. Those issuing the report do not seem to catch the irony that its purpose is to induce a sense of distress and anxiety about both the mental health of the American people and the state of health care. And, of course, religion is, at least by implication, indicted by the report since a message such as "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!" is certainly aimed at inducing acute anxiety about one's way of life and even, pushing the acute to the ultimate, one's eternal salvation. In the biblical scheme of things, we live in a world radically disordered by sin. Deep anxiety about this unhappy state of affairs is the mark of a person on the way to spiritual and mental health.

The report's efforts at "scientification" are not

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without their amusing aspects. For instance, we are told that, among Americans age eighteen to fifty-four, 14.9 percent experience anxiety disorders and 7.1 percent experience mood disorders at least once a year. Now, even if we could agree on a plausible definition of such disorders, how could one possibly determine what percentage of a hundred million people have such experiences? Think about it. The report candidly admits that "for the most part, the causes [of mental disorders] remain unknown," although, turning philosophical, it declares that "the split between mind and body" proposed by Descartes in the seventeenth century "is artificial and antiquated, and has hampered mental health research." The discussion of causes concludes with this: "The roots of most mental disorders lie in some combination of biological and environmental factors." In other words, your problem is either inside you or in the world around you. Science marches on.

A big part of the report is devoted to advancing, once again, the proposition that "mental disorders are not character flaws, but are legitimate illnesses that respond to specific treatments." One may be allowed to wonder why, if a disorder is "legitimate," it is a disorder at all. Why does something that is legitimate require treatment? But, of course, the purpose of the report is to sell treatment, and toward that end to reduce embarrassment about purchasing it. We are told that the "cruel and unfair stigma attached to mental illness" is "inexcusably outmoded" and must no longer be tolerated. "Why," the report asks, "is the stigma so strong despite better public understanding of mental illness?" "The answer appears to be fear of violence. People with mental illness, especially those with psychosis, are perceived to be more violent than in the past." In fact, says the report, "there is very little risk of violence or harm to a stranger from casual contact with an individual who has a mental disorder." Most people who fear violence, one may reasonably conjecture, are not afraid of casual contact with strangers but of intimate contact with, for instance, abusive husbands, wives, or parents.

The reason for the "stigma" surrounding mental illness is, I dare to suggest, not usually related to violence at all. Aunt Martha puts salt in her cooking where the recipe calls for sugar because she believes that the Trilateral Commission has falsified all the cookbooks. In this respect, as in others, Aunt Martha is just a little—if I may still be permitted the term—crazy. I don't know if that's a "character flaw," but it's an important thing to know about Aunt Martha. I mean simply that it's something to take into account when dealing with Aunt Martha, especially if she invites you to dinner. Similarly, the parishioner who after Mass insists that I shake hands with his wife, although she died four years ago, is not the least bit violent. He is very strange in a perfectly harmless, indeed rather endearing, way.

Because I am not prepared to declare that they are all mentally disordered, I refuse to believe that the people in the psychotherapeutic establishment really believe what they say about the "stigma" of mental illness. If, God forbid, the Surgeon General breaks his leg or comes down with prostate cancer, there is certainly no stigma attached to that. If, however, he and others responsible for this report suffer from anxiety disorders and dissociative thinking that results in logical incoherence, it may tend to discredit their arguments. I don't know how one gets around the suggestion that there is something like a stigma connected to such disorders, and that they may even reflect a character flaw. Whether there is an effective treatment is quite another matter.

Again, mental illness is a very serious subject deserving of very serious attention. But as one of the one in five who is defined as suffering from a mental disorder for which the report is peddling treatment, I hope the Surgeon General will not be offended if I say that I'm not buying. What I might do this evening is stop by the video store and check out Jimmy Stewart's *Harvey*. Better yet, there is that new volume in the *Collected Works* of G. K. Chesterton.

FT

An Artful Defense

"An Artful Defense" is the title of John O'Sullivan's column in Canada's *National Post*. He tells me that he wrote it tongue in cheek, but I don't know why. It just might work. Herewith, by permission, O'Sullivan's lawyerly argument.

Sometime soon, Dennis Heiner will appear in a New York court accused of defacing a portrait of the Virgin Mary that the artist himself, Chris Ofili, had already covered in elephant dung and pornographic cut-outs. If Mr. Heiner defends himself cleverly, his trial could be the trial of the century—an arts version of the famous Scopes "monkey" trial in Tennessee. But how can he

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possibly do that? Was not artist Chris Ofili's Virgin Mary the object of veneration by art critics, by the crowds attending the "Sensation" exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, and even by clergypersons themselves? The Reverend Barbara Hussan, an Episcopal priestess, told the *New York Post* she had no objection to the original painting: "Is it offensive? No. I could quibble with the genitalia, but only because it doesn't work artistically. But it's much prettier than I expected. It's quite beautiful."

While the Episcopal Church mainly exists these days to make satire redundant, the Rev. Barbara's distinction is significant. Her sole objection (a mild one) to surrounding the Virgin Mary with pornographic cut-outs is that they don't work "artistically." Holiness now attaches to works of art rather than to religious practices, sacrilege is an artistic rather than a religious concept, and the Rev. Barbara is a priestess in the Religion of Art. (She'll have to get in line.)

That, surely, points the way for Mr. Heiner's defense. He should maintain that his painting of white stripes on the defaced Virgin Mary was itself a work of art. After all, by virtually every test that the defenders of the "Sensation" exhibition lay down in such matters, defacing a portrait—even an undefaced one—counts as a work of art. Indeed, Marcel Duchamp's *Mona Lisa* in 1919—almost the first such work in this anti-art tradition—consisted of a mustache painted by Duchamp on a copy of the painting.

Let us, however, check Mr. Heiner's work against the art world's criteria: *Art is subjective—it is whatever the artist says it is.* In recent years we have seen a pile of bricks, a cow cut in half, piles of human ordure, and many other minor outrages presented by the artists as works of art and timidly accepted by the viewing public as such. All were exhibited by respectable galleries and all reviewed, generally respectfully, by the art critics. A favorite for this year's "prestigious" Turner Prize in London is the unmade bed, complete with stains and used Kleenex, that the artist lived in while having some kind of suicidal breakdown. Both Mr. Heiner's actions and the final object they produced are works of art squarely in this tradition. And if he says it's art, who is to gainsay him? Maybe someone should enter him for the Turner Prize competition?

Art is transgressive—meant to outrage and disturb. Here Mr. Heiner has succeeded beyond the dreams of most artists. Not only has he transgressed the law itself—when even the bolder spirits in Bohemia studiously avoid a night in the cells—but the entire conventional art establishment is in a perfect rage at his actions. For he has revealed that the modernist tradition in painting now exhibits the inert imagination and frozen predictability that Duchamp (wrongly) attributed to the established artists of his day. It is all trivial gestures of revolutionary defiance to loud corporate applause. Chris Ofili—a Duchamp at the end of this particular artistic tether—could paint a mustache on the Virgin Mary, so to speak, but after sawn-off cows, unmade beds, and piles of ordure, he could hardly hope to shock anyone by doing so. By whiting out the mustache, however, Dennis Heiner has thrown Bohemia into a complete tizzy.

Great Art is never recognized in its own day. Surely the final proof of Mr. Heiner's genius is that he will shortly appear in court—the philistine's ultimate response to true art. No one, it seems, has recognized the revolutionary force of his artistic gesture. Like that theatrical moment in Yasmin Reza's play, *Art*, in which a proto-Heiner transforms an almost plain white painting, qualified only by semi-visible downward-sloping diagonal lines, from a dull, conventional work of modern art into a clever cartoon by drawing a skier racing down the lines, Mr. Heiner has turned the world right side up. With a few simple bold strokes of white paint, he has defaced a ruin, desecrated the sacrilegious, and deconstructed a slum.

Is Art a crime, Your Honor? The defense rests.

FT

Incorrigibly Christian America II

Last month we took up the subject of how America is incorrigibly "Christian America," and what we should make of that fact. In one of his earlier books, *Unsecular Man*, sociologist Andrew Greeley did an imaginative historical reconstruction of on-the-ground Christian belief and practice in thirteenth-century Europe, the so-called "age of faith." He makes a plausible case that practice was at least as lax and belief at least as confused as is the case today. He goes so far as to suggest that, by comparison, ours might more aptly be called the age of faith. One of the most ambitious studies of religion in America done in recent years was directed by Seymour Lachman and Barry Kasmin of City University of New York (*One Nation Under God:*

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Religion in Contemporary American Society). Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with more than 113,000 adults, and one of their more remarkable findings is that almost nobody described their religion as "New Age." Projecting from the study, they estimate that there are probably fewer than twenty thousand "New Agers" in the entire American population. This met with incredulity from some commentators. You have only to go to the big bookstore at your local mall to find what seems to be miles upon miles of books and tapes and videos in the categories of "religion" and "spirituality" that fit the general description of New Age. If almost nobody is "into" New Age, who is buying those millions of books?

I expect the answer is obvious, and it has to do with the ways in which America is confusedly Christian. In perfectly good faith, people tell the interviewers that they are Methodist or Baptist or Roman Catholic or Lutheran, sensing no inconsistency with their interest in the esoteric or occult doctrines of New Age spiritualities. The Missouri Synod Lutheran who on Sunday morning listens approvingly to the pastor's unequivocal insistence that there is no salvation apart from "justification by faith" is during the week finding reincarnation "very meaningful" and declares that the teaching of a quasi-Hindu master on the nonreality of reality is pretty much the same thing as Jesus taught. Students of contemporary society speak of the "cognitive dissonance" by which people live within, and shuttle back and forth between, two incompatible worldviews, the one religious and the other thoroughly secular. There is also cognitive dissonance within the religious worlds of Christianity. The discomfort of that dissonance is ameliorated by paying slight attention to the cognitive. Religion is understood as that which "meets my needs," and for many people, if not most, clear thinking is not high on their list of felt needs.

To say that something or someone is "incorrigible" is usually not a compliment. It suggests that they are not capable of amendment, that they are unruly or out of control. In saying that America is incorrigibly Christian, I intend to suggest precisely that. I certainly do not mean that everything that goes under the label of Christianity is *authentically* Christian. What constitutes authentic or orthodox Christianity is, of course, a much controverted subject, and has been from the beginning. Fundamentalists and evangelicals have a habit, irritating to many who are not fundamentalists or evangelicals, of saying that someone is a Christian or became a Christian on a specific date, meaning the person had a prescribed conversion experience and holds to certain tenets considered essential to authentic Christianity. A recent book written by an evangelical opines that, while only God knows for sure, it is reasonable to think that less than 10 percent of Americans are Christians. An evangelical missionary magazine offers a profile of Poland and insouciantly declares, "Christians are a small minority, probably no more than fifty thousand. The rest of the population is Roman Catholic."

A Catholic (and catholic) Sensibility

The Catholic Church, too, has a very definite position on what constitutes orthodox Christianity, a position for which it claims the authority of two thousand years of doctrine institutionalized in the Magisterium, or teaching office, of the Church. There are more than a billion Catholics in the world—a little over half of the total Christian population—and they are often related to that teaching authority in a manner that might generously be described as flexible. Most of them have never read a papal encyclical and may be only vaguely aware of the doctrines expounded in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, but they are sure that they are Catholic Christians. Sometimes, especially in Latin America, which is the most densely Catholic region of the world, flexibility reaches a level of promiscuity that is aptly called syncretism, meaning a hodgepodge mix of Christianity with beliefs and practices that the Church would hardly recognize as authentically Christian. When I was in Cuba for the Pope's pastoral visit, there was an ecumenical meeting with various religious groups, and the priests of the Santeria cult complained that they were not invited. Santeria is a curious mix of Catholicism and African religions, in which Catholic saints are identified with various nature gods and goddesses. When asked why the Santeria leaders were not invited, the Cardinal of Havana seemed surprised by the question. The answer was obvious. "They are baptized Catholics. You don't invite Catholics to an ecumenical meeting."

The present discussion of incorrigibly Christian America reflects something of that catholic (upper case or lower case) sensibility. It is a generously flexible disposition toward beliefs and practices that somehow derive from or gravitate toward what we might recognize as authentic Christianity. We are inclined to view Santeria and similar religious expressions as impossibly "primitive," but it may be that Christianity in this most advanced

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society of ours is, at least to a significant extent, a kind of American Santeria. Some sociologists of religion have also referred to American Shinto, meaning a culturally pervasive but doctrinally indeterminate religiosity similar to Shintoism in Japan. The catholic sensibility on this score was well expressed in the nineteenth century by John Henry Newman:

> Now, the phenomenon, admitted on all hands, is this: that a great portion of what is generally received as Christian truth is in its rudiments or in its separate parts to be found in heathen philosophies and religions. For instance, the doctrine of a Trinity is found both in the East and in the West; so is the ceremony of washing; so is the rite of sacrifice. The doctrine of the Divine Word is Platonic; the doctrine of the Incarnation is Indian; of a divine kingdom is Judaic; of angels and demons is Magian; the connection of sin with the body is Gnostic; celibacy is known to Bonze and Talapoin; a sacerdotal order is Egyptian; the idea of a new birth is Chinese and Eleusinian; belief in sacramental virtue is Pythagorean; and honors to the dead are a polytheism. Such is the general nature of the fact before us; [our opponents] argue from it—"These things are in heathenism, therefore they are not Christian": we, on the contrary, prefer to say, "These things are in Christianity, therefore they are not heathen."

Suffusing Everything

Our social and cultural understanding of "Christian America" should be marked by a similar sensibility. If our interest is in our soul's salvation or to discover the ultimate truth, we cannot be too attentive to what is authentically Christian. But for the purposes at hand there are few purity tests; Christianity is understood as a flexible, fluid, and protean reality. Almost all of social reality flows into it, through it, out of it, and back into it again. That is in the nature of religion, and not only of religion. Social science speaks of the "religion factor," and, in attempting to explain why people do what they do and think what they think, we try to isolate what is called the "religion variable," which is perfectly understandable, but we should not take such terminology too literally. It is somewhat like speaking of the "erotic factor" or of the "economic factor" in human life. The erotic and economic penetrate and suffuse almost everything.

The territorial ambitions of academic disciplines tempt writers to try to encompass everything within their specialty. In economics, "rational choice" theorists would explain everything, including religion and the erotic, in terms of economic exchange. Thus, for instance, a recent article in an academic journal on whether the decision of Jesus to embark on the course that got him crucified stands up to cost-benefit analysis. In this view, everything is economics. Those whose specialty is religion are subject to the same temptation, and end up declaring that everything is religion—or, in a dominantly Christian society, that everything is Christianity. A "functional" definition of religion equates religion with an operative belief system, and writers then go on to demonstrate that all action entails belief derived from a belief system, and therefore all action is religious. The result is a tautology that serves no useful function at all.

Resisting the Obvious

In speaking of the incorrigibility of "Christian America," we should try to avoid such pitfalls. The Christian factor cannot be controlled or even tracked with any degree of precision. Certain explicitly Christian statements, actions, and institutions can be pinpointed, but Christianity is pervasive and variable. A simple analogy may be useful. I notice that items of software I have purchased for my personal computer carry a notice that they are "leased" or "licensed" to me. Apple or Microsoft are putting me on notice that I do not own these programs; they are just selling me permission to use them. But of course this is largely a fiction. There are millions of pieces of software out there being used in ways over which the manufacturer has no control. They can be manipulated, combined, and recombined with results that bear little resemblance to what was originally purchased. No analogy is perfect, but it is something like that with Christianity in America. We should not lose sight of the fact, however, that nine out of ten users still claim that their moral and spiritual software is Christianity. At the risk of pushing the analogy too far, one notes that most of them regularly go to churches where, so to speak, they have the manufacturer re-authenticate the programs they are using. And, of course, in America there are enough manufacturers of the product called Christianity that almost anything can get certified as authentic.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Ash Wednesday again. With the ashes the cross is traced on our foreheads. "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." A solemn little ritual, and each year I am astonished by the eagerness with which the multitudes turn out for it. I really don't understand why; it is so totally counter to the fatuously upbeat spiritualities of the culture. That's probably why. But then the solemnity is countered by church music for which somebody should do penance in this penitential season. Somebody named Tom Conry is responsible for this bit of doggerel, set to a tune of Broadway kitsch and peddled by New Dawn Music:

We rise again from ashes,
from the good we've failed to do.
We rise again from ashes,
to create ourselves anew.
If all our world is ashes,
then must our lives be true,
an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

Do we rise from ashes or bow to the ashes that signify our mortality? If all the world is ashes, how can our lives, which are undoubtedly part of the world, be true? And, most important, if we can create ourselves anew, doesn't that make the cross superfluous? I expect I'll be accused of nit-picking again, but it does seem a pity to let heretical triteness detract from the solemnity of the moment that is Ash Wednesday.

■ When the report was published in 1987, it threw the Canadian political class into a tizzy. The House of Commons issued a report, *The War Against Women*, and then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney commissioned a $10 million inquiry into what must most urgently be done. Published in the *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, the report was based on survey research that showed an awful lot of men beating up on women. What was not said, according to the *National Post*, is that the same research showed that women beat up on men at an equal rate, with women saying that, in the case of more severe conflicts, they started it two-thirds of the time. But the best part of the story is the sangfroid in the explanation of why only one side of the research was published earlier: "The researchers, Leslie Kennedy and Donald Dutton, say they were primarily interested in male-to-female violence at the time." But of course.

■ I see the Jesuits and St. Andrew's Parish of Portland, Oregon, have opened a new kind of school for students in grades six through eight. It says here that "Nativity School will operate year round. The school day will begin early and end with a study hall from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. after a break for family time." Year round from breakfast to bedtime? One cannot help but wonder where the family comes into the picture. Many schools have a period called homeroom. Nativity, it seems, will have a period for home, period. Let's hope the break for family time is "quality time," as it is said in this nation of broken families.

■ An alert reader came across the website of the Ultramundane weekly, the *National Catholic Reporter*. He thought its mission statement might be of interest. It includes this: "The National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company attempts to cooperate with God's grace in history. We work out of the Roman Catholic tradition." The "attempts" is commendably modest. On the second score, the achievement of *NCR* is undeniable.

■ In these pages, as elsewhere, Francis Fukuyama's *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* has received deserved attention. Reviewing the book in the *Public Interest*, James Q. Wilson says he agrees with Fukuyama's hopeful contention that human nature itself will recoil against cultural meltdown and, sooner or later, begin to rebuild the "social capital" essential to a reasonably ordered life. Wilson does not buy, however, Fukuyama's claim that the disruption began in the sixties and was primarily driven by a change in sex roles and the economic transition to an "information society." Fukuyama is aware of the cultural explanation of the great disruption, but he thinks culture changes too slowly to account for what has happened. Wilson disagrees. "The reason culture can change quickly is that much of it is produced by social elites who are easily drawn to new ideas and adventuresome practices. In England and America, changes had begun around the turn of the century and had come into full flower by the end of the First World War. The Bloomsbury set had replaced Queen Victoria, resistance to war had replaced habitual patriotism, and writers argued that crime was the result of social injustice rather than a weak human nature. By the 1940s, artists and musicians had taken up heroin, just as in the 1960s they took up marijuana and in the 1970s and 1980s they took up cocaine. At first, ordinary people continued in their customary cultural patterns. They flirted with sexual expression and personal

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liberation in the 1920s, but soon the Great Depression and the Second World War put an end to those adventures. Those two decades—the 1930s and the 1940s—could be called the Great Timeout: a two-decade interruption in the process of self-liberation. But when the war ended, and as the children of the Baby Boom reached adolescence, self-liberation returned with a vengeance and the Great Disruption was born. This produced many good things—for example, a concern for civil rights—but many bad ones, too. The tragedy for ordinary people, as Myron Magnet has pointed out in *The Dream and the Nightmare*, is that they often lack the resources with which to fight back against decadence. The rich can afford psychotherapy and drug treatment programs; the poor cannot. The rich can use gates and guards to protect their homes; the poor cannot. The rich can send their children to good private schools; the poor cannot. And so social elites can more readily cope with the defects of contemporary society while the poor, and much of the middle class, must await the slow reemergence of a more virtuous culture."

■ Of course we think every article we publish is worthy or we wouldn't publish it. But I do have my favorites, and high on the list is "How the World Lost Its Story" (October 1993) by Lutheran theologian Robert Jenson. (See his updating, "Can We Have a Story?", in this issue.) Protestantism, he wrote, is the form that Christianity took under the conditions of modernity, and the hyper-modernity that is called postmodernity makes clear that Protestantism's "time is past." That perhaps puts it too bluntly; for the nuances you might want to go back to the article itself. In any event, Jenson wrote: "Modern Christianity, i.e., Protestantism, has regularly substituted slogans for narrative, both in teaching and in liturgy. It has supposed that hearers already knew they had a story and even already knew its basic plot, so that all that needed to be done was to point up certain features of the story—that it is 'justifying,' or 'liberating,' or whatever. The supposition was always misguided, but sometimes the Church got away with it. In the postmodern world, this sort of preaching and teaching and liturgical composition merely expresses the desperation of those who in their meaningless world can believe nothing but vaguely wish they could." I was reminded of the Jenson article when an alert reader sent me a brochure handed out at Grace Cathedral (Episcopal) in San Francisco, signed by Bishop William E. Swing. The bishop writes: "You know from the past about inquisitions and crusades and witch-hunts. You live in a time of religious military zealots, abortion-clinic bombings, and TV evangelists attempting to take power in our land." He goes on to assure the visitor that Grace Cathedral is "a place of religious immunity" from such horrors. "An answer is Grace Cathedral. Here operates an unconditional surrender to the freedom of God to speak to whomever in whatever language is understandable. In this space you can walk the labyrinth of life to the tune of the Spirit which you uniquely hear. Immunity from religious control is granted you upon entry. Grace offers 'sanctuary' to everyone and premises this glorious freedom of God as the climate to explore the healthiest living that religion affords." The distance from "the faith once delivered to the saints" to walking to "the tune of the Spirit which you uniquely hear" neatly sums up the religious deformation so astutely analyzed by Robert Jenson.

■ A bright young twenty-something approaches me with an envelope in hand and announces, "They're baaack!" The envelope contains an invitation to an "International Interactive Worldwide Forum on the Content of Education in a Global Civilization" to be held in Lucknow, India. The theme of the meeting is, I kid you not, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Child." This is sponsored by the State of the World Forum, which lists on its board luminaries such as Jean-Bertrand Aristide, former President of Haiti, James Baker, former U.S. Secretary of State, Mikhail Gorbachev, former everything, and Ted Turner of Turner Inc. The bash is cosponsored by, among others, the World Citizen Foundation, the Institute for Global Ethics, the Communitarian Network, and the Global Dialogue Institute. Participants will interactively take up questions such as "Is there a need for a new definition of education?" and "What are the universal values and global principles in education?" A sidetrip to the Taj Mahal is on offer. No, my young friend, they're not back. But they are still hanging around. On the other hand, such an international gathering in India costs big dollars. Celebrating the future of liberal progressivism's past is a luxury requiring nostalgists with deep pockets.

■ Few people have done so much to advance Jewish-Christian relations over the years as Franciscan Father David-Maria Jaeger, who serves on the Holy See's working commission with the State of Israel. In a recent interview he had some candid words about realities that threaten to undermine the enormous progress that has been made in the dialogue. "I have the impression that, for some

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decades now, some of our Jewish friends who are carrying forward the dialogue have taken a prosecutorial attitude, basically pointing out the faults in the behavior of Catholics toward Jews over the centuries and demanding rectification. This might have been justifiable, indeed necessary and salutary, at some point in the past in order to awaken the conscience of the Christian world to a reconsideration of the attitude toward the Jews. And, indeed, that approach did bear a lot of fruit. It did awaken powerfully the conscience of the Christian world. It played an enormously important role in bringing the dialogue to where it is, to what it has achieved. But this prosecutorial approach, whatever its merits in the past, has run its course. It has reached what economists call 'the point of diminishing returns.' Instead of awakening consciences, it is dulling them. Instead of helping to jolt us into progress, it is threatening to undo the achievements that have already been made. I have pleaded—I have begged, emotionally—my friends on the Jewish side to desist, to rethink their approach, because the continuation of these aggressive prosecutorial behaviors and statements are really creating a tremendous amount of resentment, mostly among those who have been most committed to the Jewish-Catholic dialogue." On the agitated question of what Pius XII did or did not do during World War II, Fr. Jaeger says that debate among historians is both legitimate and necessary, but: "What is absolutely not legitimate, what is an extremely grave offense to the world's one thousand million Catholics and an extremely grave offense to the Holy See and to the revered memory of a great pontiff, is to accuse or to imply that whatever he had done or not done was motivated by a sympathy with the aims of the persecutors of the Jews or a sharing of their anti-Jewish prejudices or anything of this sort. This simply is not admissible." Asked whether current frustrations suggest that the dialogue should be put on hold, Fr. Jaeger responded, "We cannot put a relationship on hold. Our relationship with the Jewish people is a reality of brotherhood, friendship, love, and solidarity. It can't be put on hold. I would [decry] any thought of that. It's not a business negotiation; it's a theological and historical reality." But neither, says Fr. Jaeger, should the dialogue simply continue on its present course: "But certainly I think our Jewish friends who are most active in this dialogue are called upon to reexamine their approaches in the hope that they may heed my appeal, which is a heartfelt appeal of a brother and a friend. At the same time, I personally think that, on the Catholic side, this may also help us to come to a realization that we must not settle for the kind of institutionalized dialogue with a handful of officials from a handful of organizations on the Jewish side. We must broaden it into a people-to-people dialogue. Now we must engage the Jewish community in Israel and abroad directly and on a broad front."

■ Andrew Delbanco reviews the Library of America's *American Sermons* (reviewed here by Alan Jacobs in August/September 1999) in the *New Republic* and concludes with this: "As an informed selection of sermons strictly defined . . . this is a rich and valuable volume. It reminds us how central to American culture has been the conviction (I revert to John Jay Chapman for the phrase) that 'there's only one real joy in life . . . the joy of casting at the world the stone of an unknown world'—and how elusive that joy has been in modern times. It confirms that sermons, once widely believed to be conduits to this 'unknown world,' have, in our own time, become memorials to lost knowledge." I'm not sure about the one real joy in life, but Chapman and Delbanco are undoubtedly right about an unknown world.

■ This item appeared in the *Seattle Times* under the title "Lite the Way." In a meeting with the paper's editorial writers, Father Stephen Sundborg, former Jesuit provincial and now President of Seattle University, noted that the student body is only 40 percent Catholic. Asked how he intended to market the university, he referred to a radio station that describes its programming as "country lite," meaning a broad definition of country music. So, in a time when the Vatican is taking a close look at Catholic institutions, Seattle University is taking a broader approach that Fr. Sundborg describes as "Catholic Lite." Of such are the frustrations of the critic. Going back some years now, Catholic universities have been accused of peddling Catholic Lite. Only to have a university president respond with, "Oh, what a very good idea!" Moral: be careful what you accuse people of.

■ The Barna Research Group of Ventura, California, does come up with these odd reports. Here's a release titled, "Atheists and Agnostics Infiltrating Christian Churches." They have determined, by means of telephone interviews with 192 people, that on a typical weekend about 2 percent of the nation's atheists and agnostics attend church, but on Easter Sunday 12 percent attend. This is "infiltration"? I wouldn't be surprised if some might call it evangelization. Whom are we to

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convert if not the unconverted? The Barna people go on to say, "Many atheists and agnostics possess theological perspectives that parallel the beliefs of Christians." One out of three reads the Bible, most believe that there is a Heaven, and one out of five prays to God during a typical week. At least they're Christian atheists and agnostics, of a sort.

■ The insatiable greed of trial lawyers, joined to the mushrooming victimhood cult, was bound to get here sooner or later. But who would have thought Canada would beat us to it? Lawrence Barichello of Toronto heads up an anti-circumcision group called "Intact," and is looking for men to join in a class-action suit against doctors in order to compensate for emotional injuries resulting from their being circumcised. "No detail is too small," he says. "If someone taunts you in the locker room about your penis, write down what they said and how you felt about it." Participants are limited to men circumcised as an infant by a doctor "for nonreligious reasons." What happened to inclusivity here? A Jewish atheist might cite the religious reason as a further injury.

■ Keith Pavlischek of the Center for Public Justice agrees with the judge who disallowed the "gay panic" defense in the sentencing of Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson, who beat up Matthew Shepard and left him to die. But he disagrees with some others who agreed with the judge: "'Gay advocacy' groups applauded the judge's ruling, denouncing the 'gay panic' defense as preposterous and pathetic. About that, they are right. If, however, *this* defense is preposterous and pathetic, what about the rhetoric from prominent gay rights politicians, activists, and journalists immediately following Shepard's murder last year? For months we heard the refrain (without any appeal to evidence) that the murder was caused by groups like the Family Research Council for suggesting that homosexuals can change; Jerry Falwell and Trent Lott for suggesting that homosexuality is a 'sin' (always in quotation marks); public officials or activists who oppose 'gay marriage'; and other private organizations that refuse to compromise traditional moral objections to homosexual practice. To the gay rights crowd all such moral concerns were reduced to a psychological disorder or irrational fear of homosexuals: it's all just 'homophobia.' We *all* seem to suffer from 'gay panic.' If the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender rights lobby is truly concerned with reducing the incidence of such barbarities, they might begin by stopping their ranting against those who hold principled moral objections to homosexuality. The displacement of guilt from the true perpetrators of real crimes, and the repeated charges of homophobia, merely gives thugs like Henderson and McKinney an excuse for an inexcusable and wicked act."

■ When the Wyoming men who beat up Matthew Shepard and left him to die were sentenced a while back, there was another media torrent against homophobia, the need for laws against hate crimes, and so forth. About the same time, a thirteen-year-old boy in Prairie Grove, Arkansas, was repeatedly sodomized by two homosexual men and suffocated with his own underwear. A number of conservative voices deplored the "double standard" of the media, noting that the Arkansas crime received no national attention at all. A spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign, a major gay lobby, said of the killing of Jesse Dirkhising, "This has nothing to do with gay people." It obviously has as much to do with gay people as the killing of Matthew Shepard, or, more recently, army private Barry Winchell has to do with the state of American society. But I cannot agree with those who contend that the Arkansas crime should have received media attention comparable to that accorded those crimes. There is no denying that the skewed reporting of the dominant media operates by multiple standards. As George Orwell observed a long time ago, some deaths are politically interesting and others are not. What we witnessed in the case of Matthew Shepard was the media's calculated and callous political exploitation of human depravity and suffering. It is that exploitation that is to be deplored, not the fact that the Arkansas horror did not receive comparable publicity. The remedy for a dishonest and meretricious media is not equal-time exploitation.

■ Thinking that the image of Jesus needed an update, the editors of the *National Catholic Reporter* held a contest and 1,700 artists submitted their entries for the cover of the paper's millennium issue. The winner is *Jesus of the People* by Janet McKenzie of Vermont, who describes herself as a "devout agnostic." "This painting is about love," she said. "It's about reminding all of us about the importance of celebrating our differences." And this Jesus, for whom a young black girl served as the model, is different. Said one of the judges, "It's not real masculine. It's not real feminine. It's not really androgynous, either." So what's left? He/she/it is most certainly not Jewish. *Jesus of the People* is the perverse "enculturation" of reconstructing revelation in our image—or at least in the image of

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the alienated class of the deculturated. "And immediately there was a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.'" But when she heard this, Jesus reassured him, "Relax, I have come to celebrate our differences" (Mark 1, updated).

■ There was an emotional moment at the recent Synod for Europe when Irina Ilovaiski Giorgi-Alberti addressed the Pope directly in explaining why Russian Orthodoxy has been so unresponsive, indeed hostile, to the Pope's efforts to advance the healing of the breach between East and West. Giorgi-Alberti, the editor of *La Pensée Russe*, which is published in both Moscow and Paris, said that the top Russian hierarchy is succumbing to the "terrible temptation" of letting itself be used politically in order to turn Orthodoxy into an ideological substitute for Marxism-Leninism. This requires that it appear hostile to the West, using the "alibi" that it is only protecting the Orthodox faithful (which, she said, is only 2 or 3 percent of the population) from "proselytism." Giorgi-Alberti, who was an invited guest at the synod, said, "'This rejection of unity is caused by politics, not religion; a refusal to open the doors to Christian brothers of the West and to the Holy Father in particular.' In an emotional tone, Giorgi-Alberti turned to the Pope and said: 'Many in Russia have requested me to ask you for forgiveness for this. Many in Russia, among those who have found Christ or are sincerely seeking him, have begged me to tell you that you must not accept the political games of the top hierarchy as an honest expression of their feelings. Above all, they implore you to forgive them, not to abandon them, and not to forget them; they do not want you to fall into the traps often set so that you will distance yourself from them. If this were to happen, it would really be the end of Russia. If the end has not come, it is to a large extent, and I repeat it again, thanks to Your Holiness, and on behalf of those in Russia who know it, I was asked to say to you, Holy Father: may God fully reward you.'"

■ Among public intellectuals, Irving Kristol is a legend, but he carries that status lightly. Which does not mean he is not capable of being deadly serious about serious things, as, for instance, in a recent article in *Azure*, "On the Political Stupidity of the Jews." As a Jewish kid in Brooklyn some sixty years ago, he well understood that he was part of a minority in an overwhelmingly Christian country. That was taken for granted, and everybody, more or less, got along. Since World War II, he writes, Jewish organizations, backed by the court system, have largely succeeded in creating a naked public square, acting on the preposterous assumption that the 2 percent of the population that is Jewish can force the 95 percent that is Christian to go along with the idea that the Constitution forbids any public recognition of the religious realities of America. Kristol notes that there is now something of a religious revival among Christians, and a modest revival among Jews, the latter driven in part by alarm over the rate of intermarriage approaching 50 percent. It is not clear, however, that this new situation is prompting second thoughts among Jewish leaders. Kristol writes: "But this Jewish revival does not prevent American Jews from being intensely and automatically hostile to the concurrent Christian revival. It is fair to say that American Jews wish to be more Jewish while at the same time being frightened at the prospect of American Christians becoming more Christian. It is also fair to say that American Jews see nothing odd in this attitude. Intoxicated with their economic, political, and judicial success over the past half century, American Jews seem to have no reluctance in expressing their vision of an ideal America: a country where Christians are purely nominal, if that, in their Christianity, while they want the Jews to remain a flourishing religious community. One can easily understand the attractiveness of this vision to Jews. What is less easy to understand is the chutzpah of American Jews in publicly embracing this dual vision. Such arrogance is, I would suggest, a peculiarly Jewish form of political stupidity. For the time being, American Jews are getting away with this arrogance. Indeed, American Christians—and most especially the rising evangelical movements—are extraordinarily tolerant, if more than a little puzzled, by this novel Jewish posture. And the lack of any negative Christian reaction has only encouraged American Jews in the belief that they have discovered some kind of universally applicable formula for dealing with non-Jews."

■ In a lecture at Santa Clara University in California, Father David Hollenbach, S.J., of Boston College addresses "The Common Good in a Divided Society." He rightly worries about the loss of a commitment to the common good, the divisive effects of the "culture war," and the exclusion of too many from the opportunities and responsibilities of American life. He says: "Unjust exclusion can take many forms. Most relevant to the United States today is exclusion from the booming economic life of the country. There are so few decent jobs in most

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urban ghettos that many people simply give up looking for work. This amounts to the institutionalization of despair. When human beings are told repeatedly that they are simply not needed, it takes extraordinary self-confidence to keep trying. Such messages, built into class structures of American life today, lead to the drugs and violence of many American urban centers today. They are the source of what Cornel West has dared to call the 'nihilism' found among far too many urban youth today." There is indeed an "institutionalization of despair," but one wonders if Fr. Hollenbach doesn't get some things backwards. He works from economics to culture, rather than from culture to economics. Young men who do drugs and violence turn out to be unemployable and are indeed "simply not needed." Over a million of them are now in jail. Ordinarily capable people who keep trying, or try in the first place, are in this economy generally given the message that they are needed and welcome. As for the source of "nihilism," living many years in the inner city I never encountered the term and seldom encountered the reality. The more likely source, one may respectfully suggest, is to be found at places such as Cornel West's Harvard University. On that score, one may even go so far as to suggest that Fr. Hollenbach, although it is surely not his intention, comes distressingly close to blaming the victim.

■ Down in North Carolina, Bill Uzzle puts out the *Raleigh Reporter* from time to time, with a liberal, so to speak, use of quotations. Here are a few with which I was not familiar. First Malcolm Muggeridge, who wrote like an angel and, when he discovered he couldn't live that way, became a Christian: "Previous civilizations have been overthrown from without by the incursion of barbarian hordes; ours has dreamed up its own dissolution in the minds of our intellectual elites. Not bolshevism, which Stalin liquidated along with the old Bolsheviks; not Nazism, which perished with Hitler in his Berlin bunker; not fascism, which was left hanging upside down from a lamppost, along with Mussolini and his mistress—none of these, history will record, was responsible for bringing down the darkness on our civilization, but liberalism. A solvent rather than a precipitate, a sedative rather than a stimulant, a slough rather than a precipice; blurring the edges of truth, the definition of virtue, the shape of beauty; a cracked bell, a mist, a death wish." Then Geoffrey Household on politicians: "In arguments with politicians I am always beaten. I cannot express what I believe, whereas they express what they cannot possibly believe." Richard Reeves on the same subject: "Politicians are different from you and me. The business of reaching for power does something to a man—it closes him off from other men until, day by day, he reaches the point where he instinctively calculates each new situation and each other man with the simplest question: what can this do for me? The process is as inevitable, and as frightening, as hardening of the arteries." To say it is inevitable is going too far. I immediately thought of my noble friend, Henry Hyde. Finally, this from Bill Sharpe, a retired newspaperman in North Carolina: "When both I and the century were young, we boys did a lot of whistling. So did grownups. It was the most natural thing in the world to walk down the street whistling a tune. I would awake mornings and hear somebody whistling his way to work. I'd walk to school and meet a man cheerfully whistling. Today, folks would be astonished and, perhaps, alarmed at such a sight. Some people were so talented that they could fashion trills and tremolos, like Cornelia Taylor, who was in demand for our amateur theatricals." I had never thought about that, but he's right. I honestly cannot remember when was the last time I heard somebody whistling, as in really whistling a song. When I was a boy up in the Ottawa Valley, we all did all the time. People thought I was pretty good at it, and I was inclined to agree. I just tried and I can't do it any more. I'll work on it. Not on the streets of Manhattan, however. "Did you see that crazy whistling priest?" On the other hand, with all those cell phones and Walkmans plugged in their ears, maybe nobody would notice.

■ Linda Gibbons of Toronto is a grandmother and a jailbird. In the last five years she has been repeatedly arrested and jailed twelve times for standing in front of an abortuary and praying. Recently Sue Careless, a freelance journalist, was arrested for photographing the arrest of Linda Gibbons. Ian Hunter of the University of Western Ontario comments in the *National Post*: "The abortion issue is unique in that it begins in lies and cannot be sustained without lies. It begins by denying the elementary biological evidence regarding human life, its origin and development. It requires court injunctions to prevent citizens from praying on public streets. It necessitates arrest and prosecution of journalists who would seek to show and tell the public how this injunction is enforced. In a rights-obsessed country, it requires us to overlook the most fundamental right of all: the right to life. Will Linda Gibbons and Sue Careless find their liberty

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in our Charter of Rights? I hope so, but I doubt it. As the great American jurist, Learned Hand, once wrote, 'We rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws, and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it. And what is this liberty which must lie in the hearts of men and women? It is not the ruthless, the unbridled, will; it is not the freedom to do as one likes. That is a denial of liberty, and leads straight to its overthrow. A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few. . . . The spirit of liberty is the spirit of him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned, but has never quite forgotten—that there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest.'"

■ Academic integrity means independence from outside influences. That was the gist of an article coauthored by Father Edward Malloy, President of Notre Dame, about a year ago and published in *America*. Recognizing the authority of the bishops over the teaching of theology would be, he said, "a catastrophe." It would mean "the sacrifice of many of those prerogatives that make Catholic universities and their professional staffs the respected and influential members of the higher education community that they are." Readers are familiar with Fr. James Burtchaell's humorously devastating recital of the myriad outside agencies to which Notre Dame and other church schools submit themselves (see "The 'Autonomy' of the University of St. Dympna," Public Square, August/September 1999). Now Notre Dame is in trouble with the National College Athletic Association (NCAA). The school has been put on probation for violations arising from a messy scandal in which a woman embezzled money to lavish on players with whom she was having affairs. Fr. Malloy and his colleagues have been the perfect picture of docility in submitting themselves to the authority of the NCAA. Notre Dame investigated the allegations, reported its findings to the association, meekly accepted its judgment. Not even one whimper about institutional autonomy, etc. Does this mean that Notre Dame cares more about the integrity of its football program than its theology department? Does this mean that the NCAA is less of an "outside" influence than the Catholic Church? That may be overreading, but the questions should not be dismissed out of hand. In any event, it is perhaps heartening that Fr. Malloy and Notre Dame recognize the legitimacy of authority and accountability in things that really matter. Perhaps.

■ In worship there is repetition, and then there is repetition. Carol Zaleski of Smith College writes in that admirable journal of liturgical renewal, *Antiphon*, under the title "Worship and American Cultural Spirituality." "Catherine Pickstock has suggested that the puzzling repetitions in the text of the preconciliar Roman rite constituted a 'liturgical stammer,' a stammer like that of Moses, most fitting for the audacious enterprise of approaching the altar of God. The penitential drama of drawing near and stepping back, the divine drama of manifestation and hiding, the initiatory drama of the *traditio* and *redditio symboli*, the priestly drama of representing Christ in his three offices as prophet, priest, and king—all these dramatic events are well served by the stops and starts, the repeated rebeginnings of the Roman rite. If this sounds too somber, consider instead the examples of children whose spontaneity manifests itself in endless repetition of chants and rhymes, sense and nonsense. In children, as in flourishing religious cultures, ritual repetition is linked to playfulness and creativity, rather than to stagnation. Erik Erikson made this point quite definitively in *Toys and Reasons* and other landmark studies of child development and its adult fruits. G. K. Chesterton captures the idea in a famous passage in *Orthodoxy*: 'Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again," and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony. But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning, "Do it again" to the sun; and every evening, "Do it again" to the moon."' Repetition is the stuff of poetry; incantation enchants. Where disincantation occurs, disenchantment will follow." (For information about *Antiphon*, write the Society for Catholic Liturgy, 331 East South Temple St., Salt Lake City, Utah 84111.)

■ Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Jr. has died. I did not name him in last month's account of my 1993 near-death, but he was the person who sent me the book on his son's heroic struggle with cancer, *My Father,*

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My Son. As Commander of the U.S. Navy in the Pacific, he ordered the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. Bud Zumwalt thought long and hard about moral dilemmas. He believed that the chemical contributed to the death of his son but saved many thousands of other American lives by making it difficult for Vietcong snipers to hide. Of the conflict itself he said, "If I knew the U.S. would make a decision to lose the war, we should not have gone into the war to begin with." Bud and I worked together for years on the board and executive committee of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington. He was reticent in expressing his deepest beliefs, but the obvious center of gravity was honor, duty, country. He was ever the gentleman and quiet warrior. I suppose he came as close as anyone I have known to the ideal of the Roman. That put him solidly in Augustine's terrestrial city, but there were occasions when he indicated his awareness that true home is elsewhere. *Requiescat in pace.*

■ You may not believe this, but some readers say they miss those gentle and ever so whimsical proddings to send us the names of people who are prospective subscribers. Admittedly, other readers complained about, as one put it, "that incessant begging." Please. It is not begging to suggest that you share what you have found. In any event, we will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to First Things, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010 (or e-mail to subscriberservices@pma-inc.net). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll-free 1-800-783-4903.

■ There is an opening for a one-year internship with FT, beginning June or September. Please send resume, reason for interest, and writing sample to the editorial office, attention James Nuechterlein.

■ Friend and frequent contributor to these pages, Hadley Arkes, is fond of referring to "First Things, the journal." The implied reference is to his excellent 1986 book on principles of morals and justice, which bears the title *First Things.* Thus, with an unbecoming, albeit understandable, hint of proprietorial pride, does Professor Arkes suggest that we came along four years later and stole his title. Now J. Bottum, erstwhile Associate Editor of FT whose apostasy to the *Weekly Standard* has not been forgiven (although we're glad for his return as our Poetry Editor), sends us a finding from his inveterate prowling of bookstores. It is a 1924 volume of exhortations to virtue by the President of Girard College, Philadelphia, who bears the Dickensian name of Cheesman A. Herrick. The book is called *First Things.* I have no evidence that Prof. Arkes was familiar with Herrick's effort, and it seems improbable since, in the words of Bottum, Herrick's *First Things* is "compounded out of nearly equal parts pleonasm and pomposity," whereas the Arkes *First Things* is incisive and modest to a fault. In fact, as noted when we launched this enterprise, our search for a title reached back long before 1924, never mind 1986, to the most important of the theological works of Origen (185-254), *Peri Archon,* which may be roughly translated as "First Things." (Lest anyone be inclined to get legally serious about this friendly fuss, titles cannot be copyrighted according to U.S. law. Whether that is the case with law pertinent to third-century Alexandria, I have no idea.)

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Applications (curriculum vitae, list of references, brief writing sample, and statement of interest in the project) should be sent to Dr. Kevin Schmiesing, Center for Economic Personalism, 161 Ottawa NW, Suite 301, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503, by April 3.

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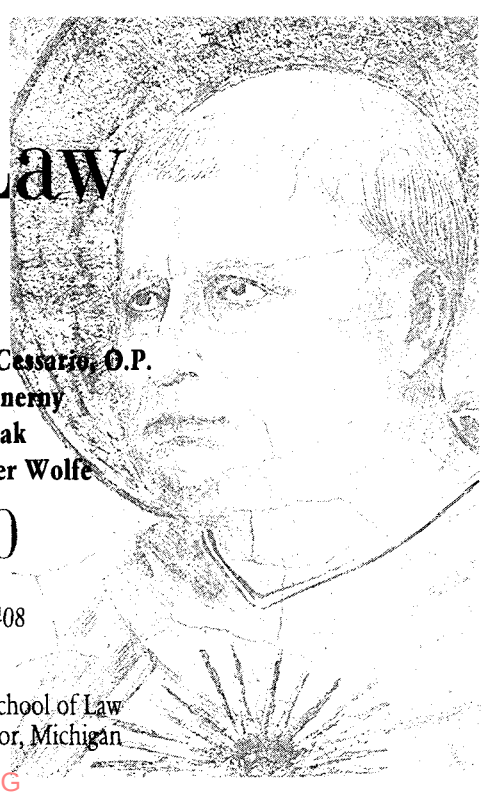

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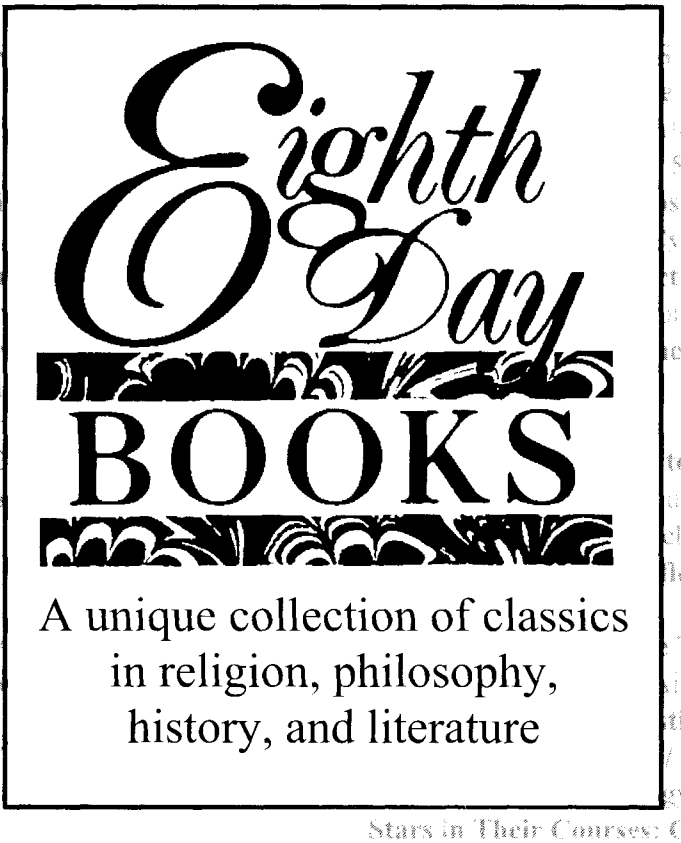

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